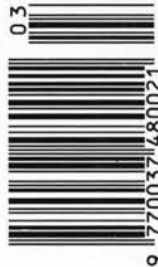


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Viva Buñuel: Alex Cox's Private View
'The Silences of the Palace': Moufida Tlatli in interview

Exclusive: Mike Figgis on 'Leaving Las Vegas' his extreme new movie



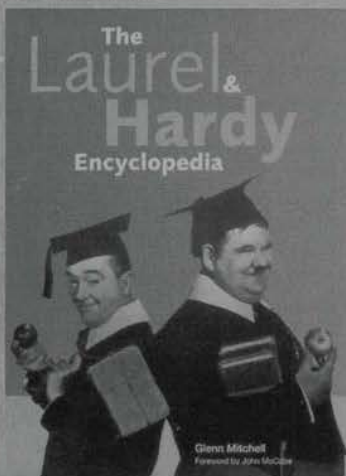
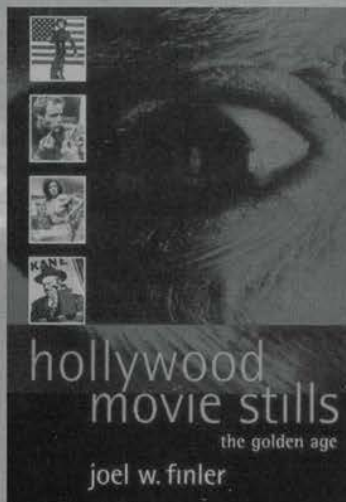
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March 1995



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Blur

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Peter Wollen is a film-maker, critic and curator. His latest volume is *Raiding the Icebox*, a collection of his essays

How does a director survive in the new Hollywood? A good person to ask might be Barry Levinson, whose films include *Rain Man* and *Bugsy*. At the very moment when Levinson has a major hit on his hands, with his high-gloss, formulaic adaptation of Michael Crichton's novel *Disclosure* (see page 35), his previous movie *Jimmy Hollywood* is being released straight to video in the UK because it did so badly in the US. In terms of traditional auteurism, *Jimmy Hollywood* is much more of a Barry Levinson movie than *Disclosure*: it stars Joe Pesci as a would-be actor surviving in the Hollywood underbelly and its milieu is more in keeping with Levinson's early films *Diner* and *Tin Men*. In James Toback's compelling working diary for 1994, published in Faber's forthcoming *Projections 4*, the veteran Hollywood screenwriter describes *Jimmy Hollywood* as "a wildly original, thoroughly enjoyable, beautifully acted, poignant work of art." A few pages later he is shocked by its "catastrophic" returns and poor reviews. This is just one episode in a diary in which the dominant moods are anticipation and dread, as Toback hoards and hones the three scripts that are his bargaining chips. Such films as *Jimmy Hollywood* are a salutary reminder that it is often the attempts to do quality work in Hollywood which end in disaster, while more calculated audience-pleasers such as *Disclosure* clean up.

But Barry Levinson knows this well; he is (and this is not an insult) very much an adaptable Hollywood creature, able to wear any one of several hats – producer, director and screenwriter – and equally able to perform either as a for-hire director or as an auteur. Like many directors who make it to the so-called A-list – those who get to make movies costing upwards of \$40 million – Levinson has to deal with a paradox. As *Variety* recently complained, "The more costly the production, the more a director's time gets consumed with political and logistical problems – meaning less time to spend on film-making." In such a scenario the actual burden of shooting can sometimes fall on the shoulders of the

director of photography, which might explain how a cinematographer like Jan De Bont could persuade a studio to let him shoot *Speed*.

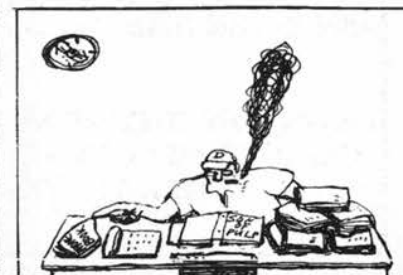
The rewards for the A-listed director are plentiful: no waiting around for finance to shoot the next film, access to top-quality scripts and a bankable cast – and in some cases, a percentage of "first dollar" gross earnings and/or final cut. The experience of this world is encouraging the more astute directors to become entrepreneurs on their own behalf. Ridley and Tony Scott's purchase of Shepperton studios – together with Steven Spielberg's forming his own studio and James Cameron's multi-picture deal – are examples of a trend whereby the creative talent are protecting themselves against an uncertain future by taking complete control.

And the long term future is uncertain. Nobody knows whether the next stage of market expansion – sending digitalised movies via the information superhighway into people's homes – can be made profitable. Nobody knows whether the interaction of movies, video, television and multimedia computer games will produce a new hybrid that will replace the blockbuster feature film and therefore perhaps demolish the notion of the Hollywood auteur. Which is not to say that people will suddenly stop making or watching movies, only that the big-budget variety may turn into something that D. W. Griffith would not recognise.

What Griffith would recognise, however, is the way that Spielberg, the Scotts and Cameron now operate. By taking on the financial risks as well as the responsibilities of film-making they increasingly resemble the early pioneers of cinema – for whom multi-tasking was as natural and essential as it was for the Dickensian actor-managers that were their forebears. As the differences between the various end-products of a Hollywood project blur (the film, the video, the game, the script, the novelisation) the role of the auteur director would appear to be blurring too.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'There's nothing like a quiet Sunday in the office – the back lot silent save for a futuristic thriller way behind schedule & spiralling out of control – time to catch up on some script reading without the damn phone interrupting – dus-di-dus – wonder if I've got Jerry's home number?'

The business

● Who'd be a Nordic film-maker? First the government gives you money to make your cultural statement (because with a guaranteed audience of zero and a prospective audience that rarely goes beyond four figures no one else is going to put up the dosh). Then they expect you to be doubly accountable: not just to Mammon but to the Nordic god of culture, too (no, I don't know who he is either, but I'm sure the reader who rushed to get his copy of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* off the bookcase after my item about the Tavianis' film can tell us).

Still, I suppose that's the 90s for you: of the heads of film promotion agencies in European countries, not a single one I've spoken with these past few months – and for reasons I won't bore you with, I've spoken to them all – hasn't complained about budget cuts on a scale somewhere between swingeing and draconian. And still they are expected to champion film culture. At least in Britain we don't have to worry about that.

But here I am mounting hobbyhorses, when what I was talking about was Nordic films. Latest disaster area on the northern shores appears to be the movie version of Sigrid Unset's classic 20s novel *Kristin Lavransdatter* – it's known as the *Anna Karenina* of Norway, if that helps you get a handle on it – which was launched last summer with great fanfare, after the idea had been peddled around Hollywood for some 60 years. (Mr Busy's handy hint to would-be producers: if Hollywood didn't pick up the idea in 60 years, odds are there's something wrong with it.)

This version, though, looked set for cultural acclaim and a box office career somewhere between *Pelle the Conqueror* and *Fanny and Alexander*. Which for a Norwegian film wouldn't have been half bad.

Liv Ullmann was directing and Sven Nykvist (one of half-a-dozen film figures on whom Mr Busy is happy to bestow the label 'genius') was behind the camera. Norsk Film – the government-backed Norwegian production and distribution company – was putting up most of the Scandinavian investment in the \$7 million movie (a *Heaven's Gate* figure by Norwegian standards), with some of the rest offset on a Swedish company headed by Ingmar Ejve (the most recent in a string of producers hopeful of turning the novel into a Hollywood blockbuster), the Swedish Film Institute and the Nordic Film and TV fund. The remainder of the budget (40%) was split between Herbert Klotz's German TV giant Tele-München, and the European Co-Production fund, one of a series of bodies which will probably have ceased to exist by the time this column appears (see the



Players playing players: Will Winona Ryder, above, star in the long-mooted Hollywood biopic of Jean Seberg, right?

April column for Mr Busy's assessment of the latest Brussels cultural quadrille).

Shooting began last summer and was expected to finish this month so that the film could be premièred at the Venice Film Festival in September. Then the leading lady, Elisabeth Matheson, fell off her horse. Not long afterwards, she fell again, not off her horse this time but in her bathroom, causing facial cuts, making anything other than long shots impossible.

That's the official line, anyway. But, since the budget over-run to date is in the region of \$2.5 million – enough to fund three normal Norwegian films – one has to assume that there have been other mishaps and areas in which control has not been fully exercised.

That, at any rate, seems to be the opinion of Norsk Film boss Esben Høiland Carlsen, who has accepted responsibility for the over-runs, described management of the film as "hopeless" and resigned from his well-paid government job.

"If the responsibility is not mine, whose is it?" he asks, with a candour that will leave observers of Hollywood's habitual buck-passing breathless. In a business where accepting responsibility for failure is as rare as a Hollywood producer who knows which end of the camera the light is supposed to go in, this makes him hero of the month in



Pining for the fjords: 'Kristin Lavransdatter'



Mr Busy's book.

Sadly, the same cannot be said of director Ullmann, who appears to have made herself aloof enough from the disaster to make her withdrawal from the theatre in Bergman's *Persona* seem merely whimsical by comparison.

Asked by top Oslo paper *Aftenposten* for a comment on the Kristin Lavransdatter situation, Ullmann said she had not been advised what the budget was.

Nor, presumably, that you have to pay people to make films.

You may have heard that Francis Ford Coppola was set to make the definitive film about Pinocchio, a project which we have surely all periodically felt the need for. Well, sorry to break the news, but he isn't, notwithstanding the pre-production office established at Pinewood towards the end of last year which answered the phone by saying "Pinocchio production office!"

Several pairs of corporate knickers, most of them belonging to either Columbia or Warner Bros, have got in a twist in the interim, and the project appears to have been (Mr Busy has been wanting to say this ever since he started writing this column) deep-sixed.

Not to worry, though. Hollywood's most prominent auteur has a couple of other culturally significant subjects not too far up his ample sleeve. Just before Christmas, he announced plans for a movie version of 'On the Road', the Jack Kerouac classic which (amazingly) never got made into a 50s movie with Tab Hunter as Ti Jean, Dennis Hopper as Cody and Tuesday Weld as Kerouac's mom. ('The Subterraneans' did get made but, thank God, not too many people remember.)

And he has just bought Inglenook, one of California's most prestigious wineries, for \$10 million, and is looking to turn it into something between a theme park and a concert venue. Once again, that's the 90s for you.

● Those of you who felt that the dividing line between actress and character in *Roseanne* has been fundamentally blurred by the recent high-profile separation of the series' star and her erstwhile partner Tom Arnold will be pleased to know that

the latter's successful transition to a solo acting career (in *True Lies* and the upcoming *Nine Months*) has not diminished the actress-character blur.

Roseanne recently announced that she and her new consort Ben Thomas are expecting a special delivery in August, thanks less to Cupid's arrow than *in vitro* fertilisation.

The really good news, though, is that this happy event has been written into the script of the TV series, where Roseanne and on-screen partner John Goodman will experience a simultaneously happy event at about the same time.

Presumably all those who called in to complain about the lesbian kiss in an earlier *Roseanne* episode will melt with reproductive delight at this latest development.

Amid all this ersatz gossip, Mr Busy feels the need to record a personal epiphany. It came – as such things will – when he was stranded late one night in an anonymous continental hotel room bereft of all defence against the cultural homogenisation that is satellite TV.

There, on La Cinq, in the original French but also for some reason with French subtitles, was Jean-Luc Godard's 'A bout de souffle' ('Breathless').

As the familiar scenes unrolled, it became suddenly clear that the appropriation of this movie by the cultural pantheon had robbed it of its impact. Never, in the years that followed, has the entire history of cinema been changed so conclusively by one film, with its tireless flow of visual and verbal wit.

Please, in this age when genre-bending passes for genius, can't someone write in and reassure me that 'A bout de souffle' was a turning point at least on a par with 'The Battleship Potemkin' and 'Citizen Kane'?

● Speaking of fashionable genre-benders, it is encouraging to report that Quentin Tarantino – who reportedly picked the title of *Reservoir Dogs* from a misunderstanding of the meaning of the title of some French art movie – is to appear with Charlotte Gainsbourg (daughter of Serge and Jane Birkin) in an independent US movie called *Hands Up*, to be directed by French film-maker Virginie Thévenet and produced by US-Japanese producer/director Fran Kuzui (*Tokyo Pop*). Lest anyone should anticipate a story grounded in everyday experience, I should add that *Hands Up* is the story of a hoodlum who falls for a night-club singer who is a prostitute in her spare time.

'A bout de souffle' casts its shadow in an unexpectedly wide arc across this month's column. Which is to say that, long before Godard's film had invaded my late-night consciousness, I was all set to report plans for a biopic about one of that movie's two stars, Jean Seberg.

In addition to appearing in the Godard movie (and being pilloried for her performance in the title role of Otto Preminger's 'Saint Joan'), Seberg was the target of a particularly vicious

smear campaign in the early 70s by the FBI's J. Edgar Hoover, who didn't like either her progressive politics or her unconventional life-style. The campaign involved a false story planted – with the help of FBI-friendly journalist Joyce Haber – in the 'Los Angeles Times' to the effect that Seberg was pregnant by one of the Black Panthers. Seberg was so distressed by the story that she went into premature labour and lost her child. A few weeks later, she committed suicide.

Plans have been afoot since the late 80s for a movie version of the actress' story (which also spawned a musical flop in the West End in 1983). Jodie Foster reportedly recently passed on the title role, which Winona Ryder now seems most likely to take.

● Dutch cinematographer Jan De Bont, who made a rather successful directorial debut with *Speed*, will not now direct TriStar's mega-budget studio version of the Godzilla story.

All concerned were evidently committed to the film being in a class apart from the cheapo-effects Toho movies we have all grown to love on late-night TV. But \$100 million was apparently the ceiling, and De



Jurassic rubberwear: Godzilla's pre-Hollywood look

Bont told TriStar he couldn't deliver for such a small budget. According to *Daily Variety*, the gap between the budget and De Bont's aspirations had widened to \$30 million by the time the director left the project just before the New Year.

Godzilla the studio movie will apparently go ahead. De Bont, meanwhile, seems likely to direct the Spielberg-produced movie taken from Michael Crichton's novel *Twister*.

Anyone checked recently what it costs to build a major hospital?

Finally, the 'Guardian's' 'The Guide' – that litmus paper for the culturally happening – recently featured cult director Russ Meyer as its cover-story. But the same paper's ever-eclectic obituary neglected to record the passing of one of Meyer's best-known associates – and one who achieved this status without the need of silicone implants.

I speak, of course, of Mr Teas, the star of Meyer's 'The Immoral Mr. Teas' (1959), a former army buddy who served alongside Meyer as a sergeant in the Signal Photographic Company. 'The Immoral Mr. Teas' made a bundle of money on what was then called the 'art-house' circuit but was sufficiently offbeat and inventive to earn Meyer a reputation from which it might be fair to say he has never recovered.

Little is recorded – at any rate in the obituaries I have read – of what Mr Teas did with the years following his stardom. But he died on 25 November 1994, at the age of 80.

● Last month Mr Busy wrote about *Mesmer* and its effect on its initiating producer Lance Reynolds. It is therefore cheering to learn that Reynolds is in healthy financial shape, despite the travails of the film.

SUNDANCE NOTES

Teenagers in fact and fiction

Photographer Larry Clark was all mumbles and bad attitude when he took the stage at the Sundance film festival last month. The notorious Clark sent a shout out to Miramax's Harvey Weinstein ("Hey, Harvey!") and talked about the day he met his 19-year-old screenwriter Harmony Korine, while sitting in New York's Washington Square Park. "It had to be written by a kid," said Clark of his debut feature *Kids*, adding that "Harvey" had told him to make sure to say the script had taken three weeks to write – just in case anyone took the film to be a documentary. Some one-and-a-half scorching hours later it was easy to see why the Miramax kingpin had insisted on the clarification. Brutal and hypnotic, *Kids* is a movie that plays so close to life it feels like the real thing, which then unwinds so beautifully and so thrillingly true that it looks more like art. So which is it?

Like Shirley Clarke's 1964 *The Cool World*, *Kids* generates some of its heat from the seeming confusion between fact and fiction, sliding between genres, and refusing obvious categorisation. But *Kids* is far less awkward than *The Cool World*, and considerably more shocking, largely because the last 30 years have meant an enormous difference in screen behaviour, especially for American adolescents. Still, no one in the audience for that special midnight screening could have been prepared

for the film's opening moments, in which two nubile and nearly naked young (looking) teens suck face – and then start humping, in a seduction scene which makes *Shampoo* look like a stroll among geriatrics. As the two fumble in the bright morning light, the only sounds are occasional moans and heavy breathing, until the boy speaks in voiceover, announcing: "Virgins, I love them."

Kids is very loosely structured around the day and night of a handful of New York City teens, one of the three most important being this same narrator. Most of the kids are white, though the music they listen to, the clothes they wear and the language they speak, a kind of hip-hop patois, indicate that the tribe they most cleave to is youth, in a clutter of multiculturalism and consumer plenty. What makes *Kids* so startling is that the story is told from the inside: the film stays in the heads of the teens themselves from first frame to last. Despite the presence of a few stray grown-ups, there's no adult consciousness to dispense advice, to give warning, to save the day: the kids are alone, it's their existential condition. Age of actors aside, this is the bitter truth that sets the film conclusively apart, both at Sundance and elsewhere.

Indeed, one of the unhappy verities that the festival confirms is how very deeply Hollywood has invaded the indie scene: the jokes this year may



have revolved around cellular phones, but less funny is how completely independent film has adopted the very logic of the industry. At Sundance, dénouements are as neat and tidy as the standard Joel Silver blow-out, and when the bad guy wins the day it's not so as to frustrate expectations, but because he looks cool in black. Call it Hollywood, or call it Tarantino, the fact remains that despite the best intentions of the festival itself, the blurring between studios and independents, the gobbling up of indie talent by the majors (a point turned neatly metaphorical when Fox snatched up *The Brothers McMullen*, Edward Burns' exceedingly modest debut, for something like 1000 times its cost) has changed Sundance for good – and some might say for the worse.

Perhaps nothing signals the downside of this development than the tepid reception given Todd Haynes' *Safe*, one of the best films at

Sundance, and (undoubtedly) of the last 12 months. At its world première no amount of coaching could relieve the audience's distress at what Haynes had wrought, not even programmer Geoffrey Gilmore's assurance that the movie was unequivocally brilliant. Brilliant yes, easy no. Although it features a star of sorts in its lead player, Julianne Moore, Haynes' fiercely satirical look at late-twentieth century malaise and New Age quackery was evidently too sophisticated, too smart and in the end too disturbingly unorthodox for those looking for simple solutions and smooth entertainments.

Safe is the powerful and thoroughly uncompromised vision of an artist at the height of his powers, for which Haynes was rewarded with stunning insensibility and a mindless pan in *Variety*. In the end, *Kids* will generate more copy than *Safe* not because it's better but because a movie like Clark's comes around once in a lifetime and because no one will be able to figure out if *Kids* is an exploitation flick or an art movie.

In actuality, it's both: if Clark never shoots another picture, he will be a cinematic immortal because of this one film. For his part, Haynes will have to settle for being merely a visionary, over and over again. These days, the only definition of independence that counts is the desire to remain not dependent, less for money than for love. *Manohla Dargis*

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EXPLODING HOLLYWOOD

Larry Gross, screenwriter for 'Geronimo', reflects on how 'Natural Born Killers' tries to murder Hollywood Action Cinema

I don't know of a movie that has made me more ambivalent, more undecided and more uncertain in my reaction than *Natural Born Killers*. As an experience for the average viewer, the blood-stained road-movie story of Mickey and Mallory is numbingly familiar, the satirical attacks on media and prisons pedestrian and all too easy. As actual film-making, the visuals of the film are rushed, awkward. There is no 'viewpoint' towards the killer-protagonists consistently and intelligibly assembled, and so the usual defensive arguments – that the film exploits the issues about violence it purportedly deals with – have some measure of truth. By almost every regular criterion *Natural Born Killers* is a failure as a work of art. Yet it is the film released by Hollywood in 1994 that most deserves serious support, respect and admiration. Oliver Stone, without entirely knowing how or why, went for it. He dared to put his deepest rage on screen. All of us who live and work in Hollywood stand abashed, first at how he manoeuvred himself into a position to do it, and second at how far he was willing to go; what he was willing to risk, what he was willing to question.

How can a film be 'bad' in the ways listed above, and be 'important' and necessary in other ways? It's confounding. It reveals contradictions within the very framework of how we try to talk about films. But this is the film's 'importance'. *Natural Born Killers* is one of the few Hollywood films that forces us to come to it, after a while, on its terms.

Everyone knows the imitation *Badlands/Bonnie and Clyde/Gun Crazy* plot of *NBK* by now, that is unless they haven't cared about Hollywood action cinema of the last three decades. Everyone knows that Stone pasted onto the basic situation a kind of Zolaesque allegory in the third act, where the punk killers Mickey and Mallory inspire a bloody prison revolt thereby acting out what *TV is Doing To American Society*. What five minutes of *NBK* tells us is that accounts of the stories and the characters' psychologies, these conventional ways of describing a movie, are all beside the point. Every attempt to describe this film, or admire it, in naturalistic vocabulary, or to explore the sensations that the garish rapid montage sequences produce, also misses the mark. *NBK* is not a meaningful disquisition on the impulse to be violent, nor is it an analysis of the role that media plays in making us more violent. Rather *NBK* is a film about film. It is Oliver Stone duelling with the recent history of the movie image. It is an attempt to look at how an 'image culture' has taken over from immediate experience. Violence is a secondary symptom of a primary disease, the sheer pollution of representational imagery.

Stone's decisive energy and will to subvert are directed against the Hollywood deal itself, the unholy pact between commercial cinema's practices, and the audience's jaded appetites. The film demands that the audience question

all regular modes of identification, and all reality of character and situation. This is done as resolutely as anything by Bresson or late Godard or experimentalists like Stan Brakhage and Michael Snow. A brief exposure to Stone's aggressive montage style tells us that we're not in Kansas anymore. We're in a radically disjunctive universe where image, action, and sensation are divorced from the narrative armature of cause and effect.

The second time I watched *NBK* and came to the film's centrepiece which is Woody Harrelson's lengthy jail house interview with media huckster Robert Downey Jr, I realised that every Harrelson speech was a question, culled from interviews with various of the legends of mass murder, Gary Gilmore, Charles Manson, Jack Henry Abbot. As I sat there watching Harrelson's perfect imitation of wild things like Brando in *The Wild One* and Martin Sheen in *Badlands*, a thought went through me. What if Stone wants me to recognise the sources? What if Stone means to distance me this way from thinking of Mickey as a literal figure in a drama? What if instead of being a character, Mickey is rather a textual effect? An abstraction of imagery in the form of a figure, rather than a person I'm trying to care about? Suddenly other things in the film start to kick in. Stone creates for us the wacky sitcom *I Love Mallory*, to show that Mallory was abused by her oaf father (played by Rodney Dangerfield) which 'caused' her to become the poisonous thing she is now. The literal interpretation of this show-within-a-film is that Mickey and Mallory are 'victims' of abuse. But the sitcom format undermines that reading. Frequently Dangerfield's puffy saliva-oozing face will flash before Juliette Lewis' eyes, a film noir nightmare. Doesn't Stone stylise the characters' backstory to undermine the very notion of causal explanation? Abuse 'explains' Mickey and Mallory? The sitcom literally tells us this but if we accept it we're as moronic as the people giggling on the laugh track.

NBK begins with a detailed shot-by-shot reconstruction of the opening sequence from *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*: it ends with the phrase "Let's make some music, Colorado," thereby invoking *Rio Bravo*, one of Tarantino's favourite action movies. All of *NBK* is freighted with and at war with Hollywood action cinema. (Stone's own films such as *Scarface* – which he scripted – and *Platoon* are even invoked as part of the sea of visual shit.) What Stone wants somehow to do is slough off his Hollywood identity with this movie. He wants, in some deeply tormented way, to annihilate the shell of Hollywood norms that have heretofore controlled his own and everyone else's careers. This is an aspiration that everyone who works in Hollywood understands: the desire to make a film about characters who are not palatable, to deal with emotions and situations that cannot be resolved positively, to leave the regular, three act, psychologically motivated story structure behind and finally, if you follow the logic, to question the whole of conventional representation.

Now, you may ask yourself, do any of the concerns I've described here, which show the film as a kind of allegory of Stone's Hollywood career, that interpret the film's goals as chiefly aesthetic, and not really political, have that much to do with the film's concerns that are political? The answer is, not much. As sociology *NBK* stinks, nowhere more so than in the very disappointing riot sequence. There, by some conceptual sleight of hand, Stone makes analogy between maximum security prisoners and the entire mass audience watching TV. Mickey makes them mad, as TV is making us mad. Get it? Well, this is profoundly untrue and unjust and unfair, both to the prison population and to the mass TV audience. The part and the whole are not identical. I read the 'ending' of *NBK* another way, of course. All of the final developments in the narrative – Mickey inspiring the prison population to riot, Robert Downey Jr's journalist 'joining' the killers, un-named prisoners slaughtering everyone in sight – occur at a speed and mania level that obliterates the feeling of casualty. The chaos of shifting arrangements and alliances among the characters is mirrored in the surface action of the



riot, and together these give us an image of the film itself self destructing, as if narrative is cannibalising itself. Mickey and Mallory make their getaway into a dreamspace beyond all narrative coherence.

Now what makes evaluating this movie so tough is that all the ideas I've just described operate largely subconsciously. I don't know if Stone 'meant' any of the things I've just attributed to the film. He is a compulsive, speeding-like-a-freight-train film-maker. The term 'shoot from the hip' has Oliver Stone's face next to it in the slang dictionary. There are things in the movie that very much don't fit into my reading: when Mickey and Mallory visit an Indian Chief who 'understands' them, he lives in a social utopia of wisdom, father-with-son (no women - get it?) which Stone doesn't seem to have too much irony about. Juliette Lewis' performance as Mallory, while superb, is emotionally 'real' in a way that contradicts Harrelson's astonishing Brechtian cool. I for one thought that Tommy Lee Jones' manic, Road Runnerish, cartoon performance was exquisitely in key with the film's stylisation, but another fine actor, Tom Sizemore, seems marooned in another picture, a realistic one. Sometimes I feel like all the actors in a Stone movie are completely on their own, left to go on whatever psychodrama of discovery they're capable of, while he just picks up on the results.

These are deviations in the film's abstractness, or they may be systematic contradictions, the way Rauschenberg will throw authentic photographic images into a completely abstract swirl. I don't know if Stone gives a solitary damn about the kinds of theoretical issues I've alluded to so far. I don't know that *NBK* has got to be both a bonanza and conundrum for theorists. Rigorous in its denial of regular film structure, it is sloppy, even incoherent, in what it wants to replace it with. Unlike the montage experiments of the early Soviets or the New Wave, Stone does not undo conventional narrative sequence in the name of other discursive or intellectual systems. Is theory that defends this film using it like a Rorschach test to confirm itself? A theorist needs to answer that question. I'm just a screenwriter.

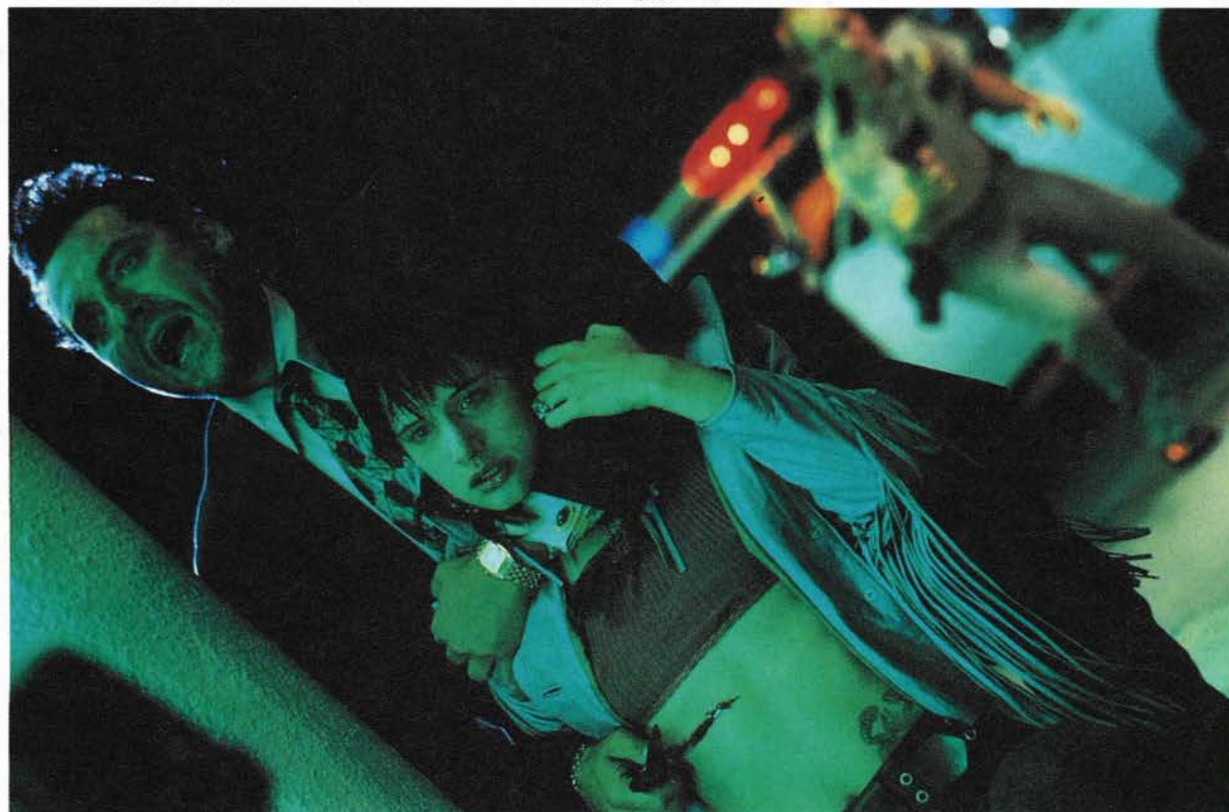
What is fascinating and mysterious beyond words is to consider how Oliver Stone got here. In *Platoon* ten years ago, his aesthetics were 180 degrees different. There, he wanted to present action, rigorously and directly. There was something

Rossellini-like in the plainness of his film-making and the simplicity of the emotional demand that the scenes made on us. Now a decade of high rolling Hollywood play has been undergone, and the sensibility that made *Platoon* is in some obvious way blasted. *NBK* is a drastic, peculiar effort at self-purification on Stone's part. He lives in a contemporary Hollywood that prizes sensation at the expense of meaning. He has tried to pry that sensation mechanism open and then leave it exploded into a thousand tiny fragments. The media satire of *NBK* is its most tepidly obvious element (Downey has, in my opinion, seldom been worse) but the satire of Hollywood is fundamental. (A similar overlooked element constituted *Full Metal Jacket*, which invoked and parodied one detail or another from nearly every American film about the military made in the two decades preceding it.)

Stone wants to make it impossible for us to get into another festival of mindless explosions, in the same comfortable way we used to. He wants to disturb the conditions of positivity we're all now bred to, that almost every successful Hollywood screenwriter is lavishly overpaid to produce. In the name of what? He is desperately unsure. Kubrick has been able to analyse Hollywood convention while preserving a surface intensity of accuracy or beauty. Stone can't, and his effort here is almost perfectly, purely negative. The truth is that *NBK*'s secret utopian ambition is to put Hollywood Action Cinema out of business. It can't be purified. It can only be razed to the ground.

I live and work in this business. All of us who do can identify with some of the self-hatred at work in *NBK*. All of us admire the prodigal giving of the finger that this movie represents, taking \$40 million of Warner Brothers' money, and insulting everyone's basic assumptions about movies. At the same time, for all the guts it took, one wants something more. Not 'positive' in the *Reader's Digest*/Norman Rockwell sense, but something articulated in the aesthetic sense. *NBK* wipes the slate clean, or tries to, but it leaves us and Stone with no place to go. I know art doesn't have to provide 'solutions', but this kind of lack of generosity and lack of intellectual rigour leaves the status quo unscathed and with too many options, too many ways to elude Stone's scattershot critique.

'Natural Born Killers' opens on 24 February and is reviewed on page 44 of this issue



I live and work in this business. All of us who do can identify with some of the self-hatred at work in 'Natural Born Killers'

Murderous duo: Juliette Lewis, left, and Woody Harrelson, opposite

STRIKE A POSE



BEH STILL: POSTERS AND DESIGNS

● Fashion means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. It can be seen as an industry, as a social phenomenon or as an art-form. In his latest film, *Pret-a-Porter*, Robert Altman is mainly interested in fashion as social phenomenon, although he is personally well aware of its status as art. Talking to an interviewer, he observed, "I think that many designers are hype artists but that the majority of these people are real artists. That's very clear." Nonetheless, as he noted immediately afterwards, "Actually, I don't really deal very much with the designers and what they do. It's much more about media and related product and hype." The problem, of course, is that without the art the hype appears pointless. The fashion world may caricature itself, unconsciously as well as consciously, and it may be cruel and absurd, but it is more than that. Without an acknowledgment of fashion's potential as art and thus as a value betrayed, Altman's satirical treatment of fashion loses its edge and begins to spin around in a grotesque vacuum. If he had taken the clothes more seriously, the satire would have carried more weight.

Pret-a-Porter is set in a world in which two or three genuine artists show their work, which is then drowned out by a kaleidoscopic rabble of supermodels, journalists, publicists, self-publicists, celebrity clients and assorted hangers-on and ruffians. Altman is interested in clothes and the role they can play in our behaviour, in our construction and projection of a self, in our obsession with image. He is amused by the fashion world in terms of its ethnographic peculiarities, its rituals and status systems, its propensity for farce. Fascinated by the glitz of the catwalk, he is not really committed to showing clothes as artefacts in themselves, as anything worth looking at seriously. For example, the re-creations of vintage Dior worn in the film by Sophia Loren are surely of enormous interest, constructed as they were from Loren's original fitting body (still retained by the house) and cut by Monsieur Claude, the same craftsman that worked there in the 50s when she was already a customer. Unfortunately, they are scarcely visible in the snappily edited film – much too long on its first cut – and we have to hope that the out-takes are deposited for future scholars in a fashion museum.

Pret-a-Porter is essentially a backstage fashion-show movie, in the same sense that *Nashville* was a backstage musical. Altman embeds fashion shows in a French facade in the same way that Frank Tashlin embedded rock'n'roll num- ▶

Made in Hollywood:
Rambova's dress for Alla
Nazimova in 'Salome',
left; Rosy de Palma in Robert
Altman's backstage fashion
show, 'Pret-a-Porter', right

Film has always dressed to thrill, from the earliest days through the 60s and then punk to Robert Altman's 'Pret-a-Porter'. By Peter Wollen



◀ bers in the framing narrative of *The Girl Can't Help It*. We are given – very rapidly – just three major set-piece runway sequences, which display supermodels the traditional Ziegfeld way, the stately promenade modernised to frenetic catwalk (the key historical reference point here being Ossie Clark's proto-MTV introduction of pop music into his shows during the 60s). But *Pret-a-Porter* misses its chance of becoming a *Girl Can't Help It* for future fashion cultists and connoisseurs. Tashlin's film, which set out to poke fun at rock'n'roll, is still lovingly watched today not so much because of its gags or its social satire, but because it inadvertently immortalised a series of great moments in music history. Future fashion historians may go back wistfully to *Pret-a-Porter* to catch a glimpse of the Vivienne Westwood and Issey Miyake runway sequences and to regret the absence of Galliano or Alaïa or even Saint-Laurent. But for a deeper look at current *couture*, they will return to Mike Figgis' new documentary on Westwood rather than Altman and *Pret-a-Porter*.

At the very end of his film, Altman gives the fashion show an anti-fashion twist by turning it into a public exhibition of nudity, with the female body as a site of authenticity, in contrast with the inauthenticity of fashion. Watching this update of The Emperor's New Clothes, I was reminded of Rudi Gernreich's experience with his topless bathing suit of 1964, which he deliberately chose not to show on the catwalk. Gernreich's use of nudity in fashion caused a flurry of press publicity but had very little lasting impact on fashion itself. It was too risky, too 'philosophical'. 20 years later Peggy Moffitt, Gernreich's principal model, threatened to resign from the Los Angeles Fashion Group if the topless suit was modelled on stage at a retrospective of Gernreich's work. Moffitt protested that "Rudi did the suit as a social statement. It was an exaggeration that had to do with setting women free. It had nothing to do with display and the minute someone wears it to show off her body, you've negated the entire principle of the thing." Altman has argued that the presence of Ute Lemper, nude, eight and a half months pregnant, in the climactic runway sequence of *Pret-a-Porter*, "took the titillation out of it". Even if this were true, it still comes across as hype, exploiting shock-effect to outdo the fashion world and establish Altman himself as cock of the walk.

Episodes in chiffon

The fashion show as spectacle has long been a staple of Hollywood films. In the 1910s fashion shows were filmed as shorts for supporting programmes and very quickly began to infiltrate feature films themselves. The decisive impetus came from Lucile (aka Lady Duff-Gordon), the dress designer who more than anyone else brought together the worlds of Hollywood, New York and Paris – film, revue, *couture*. Lucile's American career began at a Christmas dinner at the Waldorf Astoria in 1909, given for the interior designer Elsie De Wolfe. Duff-Gordon and De Wolfe noted that their high-society dining companions were wearing inferior copies of out-of-fashion Paris *couture*. "Some of these women are extraordinarily attractive,"

observed Duff-Gordon, "but they don't know how to dress. I wish I could teach them." De Wolfe was enthusiastic: "Why don't you? I have a splendid idea. The first English Lady of Title to open a dress-shop for the Four Hundred!" (In other words, for the New York élite.) Next spring the salon was already open, with 150 gowns shipped over from London and, more significantly, four of Lucile's top models – Gamela, Corisande, Florence and Phyllis.

Some years later, in 1915, Flo Ziegfeld married the comedy actress Billie Burke, a Lucile customer, who took him shopping at the Lucile salon on 57th Street, where he saw and was stunned by Dolores, the then-current supermodel. In homage, he recreated the scene of his discovery in a special revue number titled 'Ladies in Fashion, An Episode in Chiffon', with nine models, among them Dolores as the 'Empress of Fashion, The Discourager of Hesitancy'. From then on, fashion numbers with Lucile models and gowns became a Ziegfeld staple. Gamela, Dinagarde, Clarie, Mauricette, Anangaraga, Savia-Maria, Boneta, Iseult, Majanah and Phyllis all followed Dolores to glory. Customers flocked to Lucile – the day after Irene Castle (of The Castles, in the teens a hugely popular dancing duo) danced in a Lucile "Fragonard" dress, there were lines outside the door, and, by the end of the week, 90 copies had been shipped out to Los Angeles.

More importantly, Ziegfeld's appropriation, for his revue, of ideas for *couture* via Lucile and her supermodels, set a standard of opulence and knock-em-dead tastefulness which Hollywood could accept as the touchstone of fashion. Indeed, the fashion show became a standard Hollywood device, lovingly satirised by Walter Plunkett and Roger Edens in *Singin' in the Rain*. Ziegfeld turned the promenade of models, invented by Paul Poiret at the turn of the century, into a show-business number – and Hollywood gratefully followed suit. The high point was reached with *Artists and Models Abroad*, directed by a former fashion designer, Mitchell Leisen, in 1937. For this showcase film, Lillian Fischer (or Fisher), the Paris correspondent of *Harper's Bazaar*, rounded up clothes by Mme Grès, Paquin, Patou, Schiaparelli, Lelong and Worth. As Fischer put it in her cable to Paramount: "THESE SHOULD DO THE TRICK." Two years later, in 1939, another frontier was crossed when an Adrian fashion show was inserted as a colour sequence into Cukor's black-and-white *The Women*.

In the final analysis, the Hollywood fashion

In 'American Gigolo', Armani's designs are considered a symbol of coldness and surface eroticism without love or depth

show has always been devoid of aesthetic interest: at most, in Stanley Donen's over-rated *Funny Face*, there was Audrey Hepburn showing yet another Givenchy outfit. In the immediate post-war period, one eccentric British picture – Edmond Gréville's 1948 spiv film *Noose* – was genuinely a film about fashion, with an American film journalist as heroine, investigating the impact of Dior's New Look on English life and uncovering the garment industry's involvement with organised crime. However, it was not till the 60s that film and fashion, treated as an art-form, began finally to coincide. The turning-point came with Chanel's designs for Delphine Seyrig in Alain Resnais' *Last Year in Marienbad*. (The only other successful film for Chanel was Renoir's *La Règle du jeu*, a film perfectly suited to her taste, with its floor-length gowns, its masquerade party, the parallelism of its little black dresses for mistress and maid.)

Stringing up the Beautiful People

After *Marienbad* came Antonioni's *Blow-Up*, with a fashion photographer as its central character, yet only a glancing look at fashion itself. The same year, 1966, Stanley Donen made his best solo movie, *Two For the Road*, a Hollywood attempt at a European art film, with Audrey Hepburn now wearing Mary Quant, Foale & Tuffin, Paco Rabanne and other contemporary designers. But the key fashion film of the year was William Klein's extraordinary *Qui êtes-vous, Polly Maggo?* (*Who Are You Polly Maggo?*). For the first time, a fashion film was made by somebody intimately involved in the fashion world itself, looking at it – satirically, to be sure – from the inside rather than the outside. Klein, a friend of Resnais, Chris Marker and the 'Left Bank Group' of filmmakers, was one of the first photographers to put models in everyday, non-fashion environments – inspired in part by Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* and Marker's photo-books.

Basically, Klein was always critical of the fashion world for its elitism and its flattery of high society. Nonetheless he felt a genuine attraction to high fashion. As he himself put it, "Perhaps, ideologically, I thought the Beautiful People should be strung up or sent to factories. But, let's face it, I was as much Made In Hollywood as any American kid, brought up not only on *Scarface* and *Dead End* but *The Philadelphia Story* and *Swing Time*" (costumes by Adrian and by Bernard Newman, head designer for Bergdorf Goodman). As Martin Harrison has noted, "Klein and *Vogue* were a successful mismatch." Much the same mismatch provided the energy for Klein's films too. In *Polly Maggo* the creativity and eccentricity of the new, glitzy 60s *couture* outshone but never entirely obliterated the political critique of a world in which everything, including politics itself, was becoming glitz and spectacle. Klein himself conceived the extraordinary *couture* clothes for the film, which his wife Jeanne designed and constructed, working with two musical instrument makers. The clothes were made out of aluminium, eerily anticipating Paco Rabanne's chain-mail and plastic collection shown later the same year. Klein knew fashion well enough to be ahead of the game. His next film, *Mr Freedom*, for which

FASHION WAVE

Cutting edge: Marcello Mastroianni and Sophia Loren in 'Pret-a-Porter', right: Richard Gere in 'American Gigolo', below



On the cusp: Audrey Hepburn in 'Funny Face', above left; Delphine Seyrig in 'Last Year in Marienbad', above

High camp: William Klein's 'Who Are You Polly Maggoo?'; left, Derek Jarman's punkish 'Jubilee', below



he and Jeanne Klein also designed the costumes, was an anti-Vietnam War farce-cum-tract, which got Klein fired as a photographer for *Vogue*. It was not till 1985 that Klein returned to fashion and film. *Mode in France* had 13 sections shot in different styles, the designers featured now including Gaultier and Alaïa. In one sequence hundreds of extras, dressed by Gaultier, cavorted through a caricature set of a picturesque Paris street-market, complete with streetsingers, pimps and prostitutes.

Klein's more favourable attitude to the fashion world reflected his realisation that the fashion world itself was changing. "Miyake is an all-round artist, Gaultier and Alaïa in their way too... Far from the couturiers whose clothes I photographed for *Vogue*." The change he noted in the world of *couture* had begun in England in the 60s and it gradually worked its way through into cinema and films as various as Ulrike Ottinger's *Madame X* (clothes by Tabitha Blumenstein), Jonathan Demme's *Stop Making Sense* and David Byrne's *True Stories* (Adele Lutz's Urban Camouflage series), Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (Jean-Paul Gaultier, with costume changes as Helen Mirren moves from room to room) and Derek Jarman's *Jubilee* (an anthology of post-Sex, post-Seditionaries and post-Westwood street fashion). In these films, fashion was an integral part of the overall look of the film and was genuinely treated as another art-form in its own right, incorporated into the cinema but not reduced to an ornament or an accessory.

Extra-terrestrial vectors

All these films, of course, were low-budget European art films (or else, as with Demme and Byrne, New York New Wave). They were directly responsive to the new interface between fashion, music, art and theatre which had picked up momentum in the 70s and eventually, by the 80s, had even impinged on the movies. The connection with music was particularly important, beginning with the Jean-Paul Goude phenomenon in France and punk in England (Malcolm McLaren and Westwood, above all) and then branching out, via the New Romantics, into the world of music videos. The *couture* video, once shot simply as a sales substitute for clients who couldn't make it to Paris, has now won its own independent slot on MTV. Music stars (and supermodels) play the same kind of role that movie stars used to in the 20s - strange, almost extra-terrestrial beings, vectors of glamour and fantasy, brokers between avant-garde and mass audience.

Meanwhile, Hollywood takes care to play safe with fashion. The designer of choice since Paul Schrader's *American Gigolo* (1980) has been Armani, who Altman passed over as not ridiculous enough. In fact, Armani's basic motivation has been to design clothes in which the wearer will feel secure against embarrassment, against sticking out like a sore-thumb - as Armani put it, "I've always had a strong sense of the ridiculous. A very strong sense. Certain things shouldn't be done, simply because they're ridiculous." Armani wants people to feel comfortably well-dressed in his clothes, elegant, attrac- ▶

◀ tive, but never eccentric. In *American Gigolo*, Armani is about coldness and surface, eroticism without love or depth. In the silent days, by contrast, Hollywood had been obsessed with fashion in the sense of spectacular glamour and display, the signifier of burning passion and intoxicating excess.

Tailors and tycoons

The moguls who created Hollywood emerged, for the most part, from the lower reaches of the garment industry. Adolph Zukor was a furrier who had made the capital he needed to invest in the film business from a far-sighted speculation in red fox pelts. Marcus Loew was a 'drummer' (drumming up business) for a clothing company, selling furs and velveteen capes. Samuel Goldwyn was a glove salesman. Carl Laemmle managed the Continental Clothing store in New Oshkosh, Wisconsin. William Fox had a business inspecting and shrinking bolts of cloth for garment manufacturers in New York. Louis B. Mayer was a used-clothes dealer (sometimes described as a rag picker). The Warner brothers' father Benjamin was a cobbler, and Harry Warner began his working life as a shoe-repairer. Jack Warner reminisced about how, "when we boys needed clothes, my father laid us face down on a bolt of cloth, marked it with white chalk, and made up the suits himself." Harry Cohn's father owned a tailor's shop, specialising in police uniforms.

When they eventually built studios, achieved power and amassed wealth as Hollywood tycoons, it was only natural that they should want to associate the cinema with extravagant and spectacular clothes. Indeed the story of the American film industry as an industry begins, at least in its classic form, with a film whose star was dressed by the great founder of modern French *couture*, Paul Poiret. In 1912 Adolph Zukor bought the US rights to the French film *d'art*, *Queen Elizabeth*, starring Sarah Bernhardt. His \$35,000 investment paid off handsomely when the US release, as historian Alan Williams put it, "was an enormous hit, providing the seed capital for what would later become Paramount Pictures, and changing many minds about the shape of the emerging American film industry." In Zukor's own words, it "had gone a long way to breaking down the prejudice of theatrical people against the screen."

In the film, as in ordinary life, Sarah Bernhardt was dressed in Poiret gowns: which meant stylised Italian Renaissance rather than English Elizabethan, with huge draped oversleeves, high wired collars of thick lace folded back to reveal a tiny neck ruff, and flowing capes. It was the prestige of Bernhardt as an actress, combined with the luxury and elegance supplied by Poiret, that moved the American cinema out of the huckster world of the nickelodeon into the headier realm of dramatic art. Combining great artistry with an extravagant sense of showmanship, Poiret – known as 'Le Magnifique' – designed for the theatre, as well as for actresses and film-stars.

Together with Matisse and the *Ballets Russes* of Diaghilev, he transformed modern taste. As a designer, he banished the corset, introduced trousers for women, and launched the *directoire*

revival and a vogue for orientalism which lasted well into the 20s. Thanks to him, fashion had already begun to move out of the world of dress-making into that of show business. He became the absent godfather of Hollywood fashion during the silent epoch. The founders of the studios' costume design departments were all decisively influenced by Poiret. Howard Greer, the head designer at Paramount, had worked in Paris for Erté, a protégé and former employee of Poiret, and had some direct contact with Le Magnifique himself. After returning to America and working for Lucile, Greer hired and in effect trained Adrian, Travis Banton, Edith Head and Orry-Kelly, who between them dominated Hollywood costume design, running departments at MGM, Paramount and Warners. He dressed Pola Negri, Louise Brooks, Mary Pickford and many other stars both on-screen and off-screen, eventually abandoning Paramount in 1927 to set up his own salon on Sunset Boulevard.

Greer returned to film-design for occasional one-offs – Katharine Hepburn in *Christopher Strong* and *Bringing Up Baby*, Ingrid Bergman in *Spellbound*. When Garbo visited Europe, she bought no less than 18 ensembles from Greer's salon to wear on the trip. Greer designed Shirley Temple's wedding dress, launched a wholesale line which prospered and then crumbled, and summed up his film career as follows: "New York and Paris disdainfully looked down their august noses at the dresses we designed in Hollywood. Well, maybe they were vulgar, but they did have imagination... Into this carnivalesque atmosphere I was plummeted. There I wallowed in rhinestone and feathers and furs and loved every minute of it."

While it was Greer who established the norm for fashionable Hollywood costume, the most extraordinary and spectacular designs came from a fan and a customer of Poiret's, Natacha Rambova. Rambova had originally been a dancer in Theodore Kosloff's American version of the *Ballets Russes*, dressed in copies of Bakst's original designs. In 1917 she was hired by De Mille to design an Aztec phantasmagoria called *The Woman God Forgot*, in which Kosloff also starred. The next year, she left De Mille to work for Alla Nazimova, then newly arrived in Hollywood to star in *Salome*. For this picture, Rambova costumed Nazimova in extravagant capes and head-dresses derived from Aubrey Beardsley. Through Nazimova, she then met Rudolph Valentino, became his designer of choice and soon afterwards his wife.

Valentino's business manager and studio both blamed Rambova for turning the star into a powder-puff rather than a he-man

In 1923, Rambova and Valentino travelled to Paris, where she made a celebrity pilgrimage to Poiret's salon, modelled *Sultana* and *Crimée* for the master (and the photographers), declared him her favourite couturier and treated herself to a collection of gowns and turbans, which became her trademark. For Valentino's next film, to be shot in New York, designed by Rambova, assisted by Adrian, she had 60 costumes made by Poiret's tailors in Paris and Lyon. For a while she dominated Valentino's career, supervising all aspects of his appearance, photographing him as a Nijinsky faun, body-painted and with pointed ears, and inserting elaborate dressing scenes into his films. Soon afterwards, both her marriage and her career collapsed, partly because Valentino's business manager and his studio, United Artists, blamed her for turning Valentino into a 'powder-puff' rather than a 'he-man'. Rambova eventually left show business, converted to spiritualism, and opened a fashionable dress-shop in New York.

Her career was meteoric and in many ways disastrous, but she was a crucial contributor to the success both of De Mille and Valentino, crystallising Hollywood taste at its most extreme and shamelessly flamboyant moment. After Rambova, it was all downhill, as narrative got the upper hand over spectacle and stars scaled down their image to safe Middle American proportions. Hollywood never again had such a close relationship to *couture* on-screen. Partly, this was because up-market *couture* itself moved away from Poiret's ornamentalism and extravagance to Chanel's understatement and functionalism. As a result, Paris fashion had a more direct impact on the mass audience. In 1929, Patou unexpectedly lengthened hem-lines, carrying all Paris fashion with him, and a panic-stricken Hollywood had to junk thousands of reels of film in order not to appear *démodé*.

Getting the look

At the beginning of the 30s, when Paris was suffering from the Crash, Chanel was lured to Los Angeles by Goldwyn for a million dollars a year, but she could not abide the egotism of the stars, felt Hollywood was "overdressed", cut her contract short and rapidly returned to Paris. In the depression years which followed, the stars finally retreated from excessive spectacle into elegant drama, their costumes designed with social and psychological appropriateness in mind, rather than flamboyant visual effect. At the same time, stars became models for generic fashion 'looks' and 'styles' rather than for specific *couture*. Thus Adrian was responsible for the Crawford and Garbo looks, Banton for the Dietrich look, Orry-Kelly for the Bette Davis look, Edith Head for the Mae West look. These looks, in turn, could feed back into *couture* proper and be elaborated as designer clothes.

Among these, the most influential was the power look Adrian devised for Joan Crawford: jackets and gowns with broad, padded shoulders. In reality, however, this style came from Schiaparelli, whose work Crawford herself had discovered in Paris in 1930. On her return to Hollywood, she asked Adrian to design for her in the Schiaparelli style, which he then proceeded to, with great success and technical



GARMENTS TO GLAMOUR

Extraordinary and spectacular: Rambova's costumes for 'Salome', influenced by Beardsley, left



A star is dressed: Sarah Bernhardt in the Poiret-dressed 'Queen Elizabeth', above



From studio to salon: Howard Greer, Paramount's head designer, above; Joan Crawford in the Adrian-dressed 'Letty Lynton', left; the Howard Greer-dressed 'Bringing Up Baby', below



Edith Head: Mae West's designer, above



skill, beginning with *Grand Hotel* and *Letty Lynton* in 1932. Not only did the other Hollywood designers follow Adrian in their own work, but his popularisation of the Schiaparelli look fed back into high fashion too. Crawford, as star, was able to impose her own taste – and thus Schiaparelli's idea – first on Adrian, then on the public, and through them on other designers.

Hollywood was geared in those days to commercialise its own fashion trends. Macy's in New York contracted for the first Cinema Fashions shop in 1930 and soon there was a chain across the country, with nearly 2000 shops handling women's clothes endorsed by the Modern Merchandizing Bureau, for the use of all the major studios except Warners, which established its own Studio Styles. In 1934 a fashion trade fair was launched in Los Angeles, even beginning to have an impact on American high fashion, as well as sportswear, street clothing and of course cosmetics.

It is important at this point to distinguish between fashion in the general sense of popular taste in clothing, realised by the output of the garment industry; fashion as luxury goods associated with name designers, expensive materials, artisanal techniques and skilled tailoring; and fashion, to put it very simply, as an art-form. Hollywood film has been at its most important in the first category, Paris *couture* in the second. Both are commercial institutions, based on a small group of film studios or *couture* houses, with their own mode of production, routines of exhibition and structures of marketing. In this sense, the annual Paris collections are analogous to the annual round of film festivals, each with its attendant type and fetishised buzz. However, both film and *couture* as art-forms are very different from their respective commercial manifestations, standing on aesthetic rather than commercial foundations.

Perhaps, one day, Hollywood will be able to return to the fashion theme and treat fashion as art, even if that means recycling the makeover movie (*Now Voyager*, *Vertigo*, *Pretty Woman*) in radical new terms. One way forward was signposted by Susan Seidelman's makeover film *Desperately Seeking Susan*, which launched Madonna on her rise to fame – but Madonna's own intense style-consciousness has worked against a movie career. Her early look, created in collaboration with her dress consultant Marlene Stewart, and her later look, derived from Gaultier, have both been too extreme for the movies. For film to take fashion seriously, there will have to be a revolution in Hollywood taste. Cinema will have to become much more like the music industry or indeed the garment industry, in which *couture*, including avant-garde *couture*, now plays a considerably more significant role than art film does in Hollywood, let alone avant-garde film. All those Armani clothes will have to go – and not to be replaced by Calvin Klein either. Let's see people going up to collect their Oscars dressed in Lun*nah Menoh or, at the very least, Westwood.

'Pret-a-Porter' opens on 3 March and is reviewed on page 47 of this issue

INSIDE THE BRITISH WARDROBE

British cinema and fashion might at first glance seem like mutually contradictory ideas. While Clark Gable persuaded American males to abandon their undershirts by baring his chest in 'It Happened One Night', and Marlon Brando smoulderingly re-established the same undershirt in 'A Streetcar Named Desire' 17 years later, there have been few if any equivalent moments in British films, moments where a star's outfits have inaugurated a fashion trend. The fact that in the 40s 'Picturegoer' magazine could advertise a headscarf printed with scenes from the films of Michael Denison and Dulcie Gray can only seem parochial when compared to the foregoing instances of Hollywood's sartorial star power (though if anyone reading this has one of those scarves, I will pay good money).

Nonetheless, reading British film history through the perspective of dress and costume can deliver rich results. Many generic landmarks, shifting star personas and responses to social change are inscribed in the shirts and skirts of Britain's screens. Plenty of cultural commentators have, for example, noted the close thematic connections between the social realist films of the early 60s and 'Coronation Street', but the actual link itself has never to my knowledge been mentioned – it being the fact that Albert Finney as Arthur in 'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning' and Alan Rothwell as Ken Barlow's younger brother David in the first episode of the Street are wearing exactly the same plaid shirt. (They may well also ride the same bike, but the semiotics of transport will have to wait for another article.)

In what follows I have tried to indicate further instances in post-war British cinema when clothing defines a cultural moment, or where a film uses dress to particularly memorable effect. It's a very selective list, reluctantly leaving out Barbara Windsor's bra in 'Carry On Camping', Tom Bell's jumpers in 'The L-Shaped Room' and Cliff Richard's string vest in 'Summer Holiday'. There are also, perhaps surprisingly, no cardigans. I'd expected to find lots of cardigans jostling for inclusion (indeed, the editor's enquiries about the progress of this piece invariably began with "How's the cardigan article?") but none merited it, though connoisseurs should seek out 1962's 'Some People', where Kenneth More and his paradigmatic front-buttoning knitwear together browbeat several rebellious teens into embarking on the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Perhaps the point that needs making here is that from some viewpoints, in the way that neo-realism is a sweat-soaked singlet, British cinema is a cardigan. Cardigans are familiar, dependable and warm, with a leaning towards shabbiness, which is how many of us see much of our national cinema. That's a blinkered view, but again, like a reliable old cardigan, it's very hard to give up. Maybe the following examples will encourage us to open the wardrobe a little wider.



Kathleen Byron's Red Dress

The instant in 'Black Narcissus' where Kathleen Byron stands framed in the nunnery doorway, defiantly wrapped in her new scarlet dress, has to stand as the greatest moment of significant sartorial transformation in the cinema of any country, never mind just British cinema. Intoxically scandalous no matter how often one sees the film, it is the supreme example of how the delayed eruption of a character's innermost

desires and secrets can be economically and indelibly inscribed on consciousness through costume. Turning a tight-lipped, insecure English nun into an icon of devouring sensuality, it is an image of such taboo-busting intensity that it makes Bette Davis' respray in 'Now Voyager' look like a makeover on GMTV, as well as proving that mail-order needn't mean second-best. Deborah Kerr has no choice but to push Byron over the edge of the cliff – for a British film, she's just too dangerously gorgeous to live.

Stewart Granger's Trousers

Gainsborough melodramas are rightly celebrated for the sumptuous yardage of their female costumes, offering intoxicating swathes of frock to a British womanhood restricted by clothes rationing. But they did their men proud too. The heroic hunks of Planet Gainsborough were dandified yet tough, elegant yet macho, with folds of silk shirt wrapped round muscles to die for, and chests exposed in defiance of rapiers and bullets. Risks were also taken below the waist – James Mason's jodhpurs in 'The Man in Grey' left little to the quivering imagination, but best of all were the Spanish-effect trousers sported by Stewart Granger in 'Caravan'. Hip-huggers with flamenco flares, featuring an embroidered design on the front that shamelessly framed the Granger tackle, they were a world away from the cavalry twills and neutered flannels of the great British male public. Romantic and daring, promising much, and so flagrantly eroticising the phallic zone that the censors must have been asleep to let them reach the screen, these were trousers to turn a girl's head.



Robin Askwith's Underpants

Men with their trousers down have always amused the British, and doubly so if the underwear revealed has inherent comic potential. Seen through the lens of mocking 70s revivalism, the briefs Robin Askwith displayed with such alarming regularity in the 'Confessions' films might seem a marvellous joke in themselves, the ultimate in menswear naff, but younger readers should be made aware of the awful truth: at the time, these were state-of-the-art pants. As I undressed for football, shamefully revealing the sensible white polyester-cotton Y-fronts my mother had bought from Marks & Spencer, how my surreptitious eyes envied those peacocks of the school changing rooms, resplendent in undies that shone with every colour of the nylon rainbow – all those purples and turquoises and chocolate browns of the 70s palette. Rod Stewart and Stan Bowles probably wore pants like those. Askwith's gormless embodiment of laddish permissiveness and condom-free bravado found its precise visual realisation in his knickers, yet the historical and sexual-political exactness of this underwear discourse ensured that it could not last. The underpants, like the attitudes they encased and the films they graced, have not aged well at all. Thank heavens Nick Kamen's boxers were just around the corner.

John Fraser's Dufflecoat

Now what was a young man in the mid-50s with half an eye on fashion going to wear as a coat if the weather got nasty? Enter the dufflecoat, emblem of intelligent youth, given a earlier outing by medical student Dirk Bogarde in 'Doctor in the House' and here modelled by John Fraser in the late and under-rated Ealing comedy 'Touch and Go'. Wearing it marks him out as faintly subcultural but it's still respectable enough in 1955 for him to be allowed to woo Jack Hawkins' daughter – perhaps because Jack had fond memories of the duffles he wore to keep out the cold in 'The Cruel Sea'. The choice marks Fraser out as representing a tentative step towards youth culture. A few years later it would be associated with CND and trad jazz, and an index of bohemian tendencies when worn by Paul Massie in 'Sapphire'.



Julie Walters' Stilettos

'Educating Rita' like its sister-text 'Shirley Valentine' tapped deeper into the memories and affections of the popular audience than many more lauded British films of the 80s. Women recognised and responded to the aspirations of the two heroines and, as in many previous films targeted at a female audience, dress and costume carried particular emotional and ideological weight. Nothing exemplifies this better than those moments where Julie Walters totters into the quads and cloisters of academia in a pair of magnificently inappropriate shoes, high heels among the highbrows, damned by footwear codes before she can even open her mouth. Shoes are especially important in films, since we can often hear them (and make judgment accordingly) before we see them. Rita's first clatter announces her unease, but the sheer determination with which she click-clacks



after Michael Caine prefigures her refusal to give up the search for knowledge. By the end of the film, her shift to acceptably student pumps says just as much about her ambivalent victory as any lines from Willy Russell's verbose script. Rumour has it she bequeathed the stillies either to Lily Savage or to Julia Brogan of 'Brookside'.



Helena Bonham Carter's Blouse

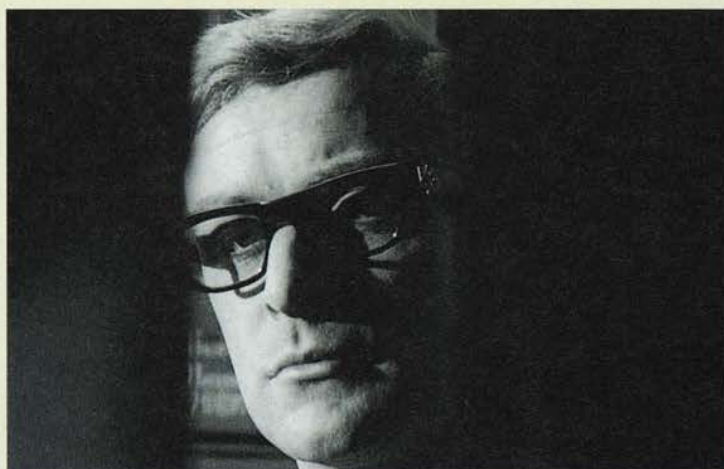
Merchant/Ivory's films have been seen as part of a broader group of 'white flannel' texts that infested the 80s from 'Brideshead

Revisited' onwards, but for me the garment that epitomises this deadening, unforgivable oeuvre is the blouse Helena Bonham Carter wears in 'A Room with a View'. Pure, prim and high-necked, it stands for all the starched, body-hating bookishness that makes this genre into film-for-people-who-hate-cinema. Bonham Carter's clothes seem to simmer, to pout, to pride themselves on the pointlessly exact accuracy of every last crease and stitch. They're clothes for those who in an earlier decade used to complain with librarian-like sniffiness about Gainsborough's more irreverent approach to historical dressmaking, where the feel and meaning of clothes over-rode any loyalty to period precision. To appreciate the difference, to grasp what we have lost in that shift from flamboyant expressiveness to arid fidelity, just imagine Margaret Lockwood, in her low-cut, bosom-heaving pride, next to Bonham Carter's mousy, buttoned-up neatness.



Christopher Lee's Cloak

The great thing about a cloak is that it's made for swirling, and nothing suits the irresistible villain of a melodrama as much as a bit of a swirl. Lee played this to the hilt, turning the Count's cloak into both a shameless prop and an integral part of the character's swoony appeal. Wing-like, operatic, subtly feminine yet just this side of camp, the cloak underlined how much of Dracula's deadly appeal lay in his devotion to style, his fusion of elegance and threat. No wonder women threw themselves beneath the folds of that cloak, when the film's alternative was an English masculinity encased in stiffly functional tweeds. Lee's Count was the fanged descendant of Gainsborough's sadistic aristocrats, a firm believer in dressing up for sex, a perverse last gasp of ruthless upper-class poise before the scruffy advent of the kitchen sink.



Michael Caine's Glasses

When 'The Ipcress File' set out to refute the murderous lounge-lizard suaveness of the Bond films, to argue for the greater plausibility of an espionage grounded in the mundane and everyday, costume was a key site for measuring out that distance. Sean Connery's cruel smoothie only needed a cape to become Dracula, and so Michael Caine's Harry Palmer had to be dressed down. The masterstroke was to give him glasses. They weren't discreet, apologetic glasses either, but glasses that screamed their presence

aloud with the thickness and blackness of their frames, announcing the arrival of the dork as hero. Caine looked vulnerable, imperfect, human – the appearance and characterisation of Palmer a landmark moment in the democratising drift of British cinema in the 60s. It briefly seemed like anyone could be a film star, even a four-eyed Cockney, which had a knock-on effect in redefining cultural codes of male attractiveness. In films like 'The Ipcress File' the old hierarchies of horniness were disregarded, and in a couple of years even the Beatles were peering through specs.

Ian Charleson's Shorts

Curiously British in their sombre ridiculousness, misty-eyed nostalgia encapsulated in a piece of antique sportswear, the 'Chariots of Fire' shorts were the longest and baggiest seen in British films since the ones worn by David Bradley as the scrawny anti-hero of 'Kes', but where those were intended to expose the boy to ridicule, to isolate him from his trimly-shortened 60s schoolfriends, the voluminous gear of Charleson and Co was an early, indicative example of heritage costuming. Historical accuracy was not as important, though, as its contribution towards trying to desexualise a film centred entirely on the male body. When publicising 'Chariots', Charleson made no mention of his one previous substantial screen appearance, which was mostly bollock-naked in Derek

Jarman's 'Jubilee', since revealing that connection could have led certain audiences to speculate what traces of homoeroticism still pulsed within the wide open spaces of those whiter-than-white boys-own-shorts.



Tunisian film-maker Moufida Tlatli reflects on 'The Silences of the Palace'. By Laura Mulvey

MOVING BODIES

● In its new year issue 'Time' magazine listed the ten best movies of 1994. Predictably, 'Pulp Fiction' was at number one. Less predictably, eight of the other nine were made outside the United States, though inevitably these nine included such well-known directors of art films as André Téchiné and Krzysztof Kieślowski. However, the real surprise was there at the bottom of the list: a first film by a woman director from Tunisia, a Third World country struggling even to establish a film industry. This is Moufida Tlatli's 'The Silences of the Palace'. Time called it "a 'Stella Dallas' story", and quite rightly placed it in the melodrama tradition. However, since the Egyptian film-industry has dominated the Middle East and the Arab-speaking world since the 20s, the tradition of melodrama at issue derives from Cairo, not Hollywood.

Opening in the mid-60s, the story is told through

the flashback memories of a young woman, Alia, a professional singer who returns after an absence of ten years to the palace of the Bey, where she had spent the first 16 years of her life (the beys being the royal rulers – under the French – of Tunisia). These memories include her early music-making, her observation of palace life and her gradual discovery of her own sexuality, but they revolve particularly around her mother, who worked all her life as a servant at the palace – and around her father. The first silence surrounds his identity (the beys demanded sexual services from chosen women working in their kitchen). As a child, Alia's curiosity about her father had focused on the bey Sidi Ali, and she had spied on his relationship with her mother. As she re-explores the decaying palace, her memories rise up like ghosts, and she lives again the enigmas of her past, that were only ever acknowledged in silence between the women in the kitchen.

Her flashbacks are taking her back to 1956, when Tunisia won independence from the French. As the film unfolds, the silence that has surrounded the politics of colonialism and rising nationalism achieves a certain articulation, which even begins to penetrate those rooms in the palace where the women live, in almost complete isolation from the outside world. But the silences that surround their sexual exploitation by the beys never find a voice. Prior to this, Alia had been too young, but now she is beginning to mature, and to attract the attention of the younger beys, the princes. In the final flashback, an adolescent Alia, now Sidi Ali's favourite singer, had interrupted her

performance at a royal engagement party with the forbidden nationalist anthem. With this act, both musical and revolutionary, she seemed to have broken out of her mother's menial and exploited world – but her mother meanwhile lies dying, in another part of the palace, of a self-performed abortion. However the message of the film's present – the mid-60s – is that for any woman, even in this post-revolutionary world, sexuality and the body are inescapable, and difficult. Alia faces a present-day crisis also: she is pregnant and her companion, the young revolutionary who once rescued her from the palace, has persuaded her to have an abortion, also. It is only through her memory, or rather through the process of deciphering her memories, that she and the film can bring to this crisis a new understanding: that independence and liberation are not solely matters of the public sphere and political struggle. The polarisations of gender, which had formerly co-existed with a world divided by class, have once more risen to the surface.

Alia's processes of decipherment are shared by the audience. In keeping with the aesthetics of the melodramatic genre, those things which cannot be said, the unspeakable, find expression through the *mise-en-scène*, the framing and the camera movements, while these same beautifully choreographed movements allow the viewer the time and space to read the images framed on the screen. Moufida Tlatli studied at the Paris film school, IDHEC. After working as a script supervisor until 1972, she built a career as an editor. When she was in London for the screening, I was able to discuss her film with her.

Laura Mulvey: Could you begin by talking about your relationship with Arabic cinema?

Moufida Tlatli: When the Arab countries won their independence, their first instinct was to build a cinema that would be the exact opposite of the existing Egyptian industry, which they saw as escapist and stultifying. So the initial intention was to build a *cinéma d'auteurs* that would be intellectual and would deal with important themes, such as the condition of women. But the people were bored by these movies, because they were used to Hollywood, or to Indian or Egyptian melodramas. Today we have a better balance. I think our cinema went through a period of self-criticism, as a result of which something positive emerged. We are coming back to the melodrama, but in a much more nuanced manner. Nowadays our cinema is trying to reach a popular audience, and is branching out into love stories and comedies. The Arab cinema-going public loves to laugh. And to cry. Of course, this new wave of popular film owes a lot to the Egyptian cinema of the 50s, which was a cinema of excess: of both excessive melodramas and excessive comedies.

What part does the theme of women and their liberation play in this cinema?

Through my work as an editor, I have close contact with the contemporary preoccupations of Arabic cinema. I've worked with several male and two female directors and I've noticed that they share a common interest in the condition of Arabic women. I often wondered why it was that male directors should be so preoccupied with the question of women, until I realised that, for them, woman was the symbol of freedom of expression, and of all kinds of liberation. It was like a litmus test for Arab society: if one could discuss the liberation of women then one could discuss other freedoms. Most likely there would not that much freedom of expression, and most likely they could not speak freely about political problems, but the question of women could still be discussed. I think that each country in the Maghreb [i.e. North Africa] tends to take up particular themes and the theme of women's liberation is the one that has been special to Tunisia. **How important is the relationship between Arab cinema and wider aspects of Arabic culture?**

I think that poetry and an oral tradition are particularly significant for Arabic culture. Poetry was something that existed in the spoken word. At the same time it was subject to censorship, so poets

frequently had to make use of symbols and metaphors to express something that could not otherwise have been spoken. Poetry allows this: it gives a fantastic freedom. You only have to have a small amount of imagination to extract another reading from the words. Perhaps the cinema is the same. It too has to make use of metaphors and symbols, in keeping with this lack of directness that so characterises Islamic society. At the same time, Arabic culture has not been a culture of the image. We have preferred to express ourselves through words, through poetry. One could almost say that there was a sort of blockage in relation to image, which was something we had to learn, something we had to adapt little by little to our own culture. But the effort of mastering something new also leads to something good: a new mode of expression, but one that is right for and specific to this culture. **But though Arabic culture may not be a culture of the image, poetry makes use of images through its metaphors and symbols, as you implied. One finds images inside poetic language.**

That's right. Poetry is made up of a superimposition of images on words. Perhaps this culture of the indirect has advantages over a culture valuing simple and direct expression. Here everything is a

little bit devious, a bit unformulated – the unsaid, and so on. This is why the camera is so amazing. It's in complete harmony with this rather repressed language. A camera is somewhat sly and hidden. It's there and it can capture small details about something one is trying to say, so in a sense it can be an instrument for poetry.

I'd like to move on to the question of rhythm. It can be difficult for those used to watching contemporary Hollywood movies to accept films that are shot with such long takes, like 'The Silences of the Palace'.

As someone who works as an editor, I was worried that the way that I was filming would not be acceptable to western audiences, which are completely attuned to a western rhythm which is extremely fast and quite different from ours. Western cutting is very accelerated and the shots are very short. An enormous amount is assumed in the ellipses between shots: one never sees a door shut once it has been opened – one is suddenly in a car or a plane, or another country. Geography collapses, everything becomes very condensed. But I was interested in the bodies of women who move, and work, with all the time in the world. The women, the servants who work in the palace, have the whole day to do the cooking, to wash and to iron. I couldn't allow myself to show



Sounds of silence: Chalia Lacroix as the adult Alia in Moufida Tlatli's 'The Silences of the Palace'

them in an "efficient" montage, which would be false, because the content and the form would not correspond. I had to show them in their own rhythm, in their own way of living and breathing. I had to show the slowness of their lives through my use of the camera. Poetry can use several different words to evoke one word. So a long camera movement may be travelling from one face or object to another to reach a point I have chosen, but on the way it accumulates all the detail which makes the final point. **Most of the long takes are in the kitchen.**

That's because the kitchen is the living heart of the film. It's the place where the women live, work, laugh, sing, dance, eat, communicate or not. It's there that the women have to create a world in order to survive. The world of the first floor is closed. The princes and princesses are shut in their own individual rooms and their own particular solitude.

In the kitchen you sometimes used a single shot to show a series of events. I'd like to ask you about the shot which starts with two of the women quarrelling, and then Houssine, the palace major domo, comes in. In fact, apart from an aside between the beys and French officials Upstairs, this is the first time that we can actually place the story at the time of the liberation struggle. Like the women, we are confined inside the palace; the outside is another world for the women, and off-screen for us.

Only Houssine moves between the two. So when he comes in, everything changes, but the shot carries on.

I wanted to preserve the unity of simultaneous actions in the unity of a single shot. If I had cut the scene, each shot would have been superfluous. What would have been the point of showing the women quarrelling? I could have cut it and started with Houssine arriving with news. But this way he makes a link, saying, "You are all fighting. Stop it. The fighting has started outside." And I end with Khedija angrily sending Alia out of the kitchen and away from the grown-ups' conversation. You see, I was always afraid of losing Alia's story when filling in the wider story. By shooting in long takes, I could keep the links between the two.

One last general point. I would like to ask you to say something about the use of music in the film.

First of all, music is very important in Arabic culture. Everyone listens to music and people sing a lot. Even quite a small gathering of people turns to music and singing, someone picks up a lute, someone with a good voice starts to sing and someone else will get up and start to dance. Even today. In the film, music is part of the everyday reality but it's also symbolic. The women sing in the kitchen and Upstairs the beys listen to music and play

the lute. Alia grows up in the midst of both and when she tries to escape from the constriction of Downstairs, she wants a lute, which has fascinated her since she was a little girl. The lute becomes her fetish/companion. Whenever she can't communicate with the grown-ups, she takes refuge in the attic with the lute she has made for herself. It becomes a point of dispute between her and her mother, who says, "You're not a princess. You have to stay in the kitchen and learn to cook. I can't afford to get you a lute." So for me it's an extraordinary moment when her mother gives her a lute, because it means that she has understood that the lute, music and singing are the only things that can save Alia.

Let's use this point to discuss 'The Silences of the Palace' more specifically. Perhaps we could start with the divided society in the palace and its affect on your use of space and exchanges between spaces. For instance when Alia leaves the attic and meets Sidi Ali in the garden, and he asks her to tell the kitchen that he would like "favala" for dinner, it's like an exchange between them.

For Alia the attic is an intermediate space that she's made for herself, between the world of the servants and the world of the princes. She is uncomfortable in both worlds. The attic is a bit of both: it's Upstairs, but it's also poor. Sidi Ali is also a

little bit in between the two worlds; his wife makes this point at the end of this conversation, when she says "Look how low you've fallen."

I was very struck by the way that the film reflects on the way that metaphors of space come to inhabit our social understanding. The palace is divided along class lines between the Downstairs, the world of the female servants, and the Upstairs, dominated by the princes. High and low. The film juxtaposes this spatial metaphor with the metaphor associated with the human body itself. As you just said, Alia aspires to the mind, to music and abstraction, as symbolised by the lute and her hope that Sidi Ali is her unacknowledged father. On the other hand she relegates her mother to the realm of the body. She distances herself from the women in the kitchen at certain moments almost with disgust. For instance, when an old woman comes to visit and all the others give that characteristic cry of triumph, Alia runs out of the room. That's because of all the questions that she is asking herself about her adolescence, and about her first period, which has just happened. That woman has brought her daughter's wedding night sheet with her, which is stained with blood and proves that her daughter was a virgin. For Alia this is a traumatic moment. There's a sequence that moves from the front gate to Sarra's music lesson with the lute to the family photograph.

◀ I had wanted to shoot that scene in a single take, because it tells a lot. Of course it wasn't possible; it would have covered miles. The gate represents the constraints of the palace grounds. And the lute is Alia's point of attraction. When Sarra is called to the photograph, Alia follows, imagining that she will be included, only to be sent back to stand with the servants. This sequence contains the whole story of the palace. For me this scene shows everything. The palace is a *huis-clos*, wholly shut off. But within it, music plays a crucial role for Alia. She is rejected by the beys and belongs among the servants. But as soon as the photograph is finished and Sidi Ali calls her, she goes back very happily. She's always caught between the two sides.

At a certain point, even this sense of being caught between the two is blocked for Alia. When she runs around in circles in the garden, it seems almost as though she was experiencing a first moment of desire. She's waiting for something, but what she finds is disaster.

When she looks through the window and sees her mother with Sidi Ali, she feels a kind of desire and spins round as though she were crazy. But this leads to the scene when she witnesses her mother being raped by Sidi Ali's brother. She is traumatised. The sight of her mother with Sidi Ali had been reassuring. She can see that there is something good between them and she is pleased because she wants to believe that Sidi Ali is her father. But the rape is unbearable and she retreats into silence.

The rape raises the question of the palace's silences. During the film, the struggle against colonialism achieves articulation. But the silence covering the women's sexual exploitation is never lifted. Khedija has no right to refuse one prince even though she 'belongs' to his brother Sidi Ali. Divisions of class and culture are constantly crossed by the sexual. Before the rape, the brother is introduced walking quietly in the garden with a book, absorbed in scholarly reflection. The first part of the film explores these contradictions beautifully. Isn't it Lotfi, arriving on the scene almost as the means for Alia to emerge from her silence and literally to 'find a voice' with her singing, who offers the possibility of synthesis, of resolution? But it's an illusion, as we discover at the end. Though it is indeed present at the beginning, before the first flashback into Alia's childhood. He does seem to offer the possibility of escape. It's only through him that Alia begins to identify with the nationalist struggle. She begins to believe that if the country can be freed then she too will be. She believes him when he tells

her that she will be a great singer if the country can achieve its independence. The beginning of the film shows that she has left the palace with Lotfi, that she has lived with him for ten years but they have inescapable problems. She's pregnant and he wants her to have an abortion. She doesn't want to. Why does he want her to? Because she is both a singer and illegitimate – so social and family pressures, typical of 60s society in Tunisia, prevent him from marrying her. He is unable to live out his revolutionary ideals. Alia takes the opportunity offered by her return to the palace to relive everything that happened before Lotfi arrived. She goes back and realises that, in fact, she had rejected her mother and that she had been wrong to do so. She realises that Lotfi had done nothing to change her life and it's at that moment that she takes control of her own fate. But to reach this moment of realisation she has to think about her mother and the way they lived before.

So this is where we can find the film's feminism? We can't understand the film's politics through Alia. We have to understand, perhaps with Alia, just what her mother's life was like as a woman, and as a servant, sexually exploited and unable to speak about her suffering. For me, this is the point where the social metaphors of space open up onto another level, beyond the spatial patterns formed by opposition and polarisation. We easily use the phrase 'buried' for the past and its memories. Alia returns to the past and its ghosts but it's not enough to dig them up – they also have to be deciphered. Is it that she has to turn back to her mother and to understand the complexity and tragedy of her mother's life, even though she was an illiterate and despised servant?

It's only by absorbing herself in her memories of her mother that Alia can understand Khedija's courage and the extent to which she had struggled on Alia's behalf, and in fact the extent to which she had been a liberating force. It was the day her mother died that Alia left the palace. Alia only begins to understand when she talks to the blind old servant woman before the flashbacks start.

Is there a connection between the mother/daughter relation and the language of cinema? Of course, they talk to each other, but their relationship is also to a large extent one of silent exchange. 'The Silences of the Palace' is in some ways almost a silent film. I was thinking of the scene between them at the mirror.

I particularly like this scene because of its silence and the importance of looks and gestures. Everything is transferred into symbolism. We talked about poetry at the

All the women are within the tradition of taboo, and silence, but the power of their look is extraordinary. They have had to get used to expressing themselves through their eyes

beginning. In this scene I wanted to show the different levels to telling things. The scene has to convey the way that Alia's fate is hanging in balance. Is she going to follow in her mother's footsteps, and gain access to the Upstairs in the way Khedija had done? Is she going to replace her mother? We see the mother watch her daughter literally taking her place, sitting in front of her mirror, putting her lipstick on, making her gestures. And Alia confronts her with a look which says "I'm going to follow your example." At that moment the mother realises that she is going to lose her daughter, who is about to go Upstairs and sing, and that there is nothing she can do about it. She can't say, "No, don't go," because she has to obey the beys. She is impotent. Alia exploits this in a rather childish and Machiavellian manner. She's playing with fire.

The audience has to read what's happening through the image?

Yes, through the exchange of looks, through the exchange of their positions in front of the mirror, through their position in the frame. It's hard to think of a film which uses the potential variety of meaning in looks to the extent you do here.

For me, the women's silence is a silence through the inability to speak. Their mouths are closed. Human beings want to speak, to express themselves. If the mouth is closed then the eyes speak. I wanted to make their eyes speak – and say a great deal. All the women are within the tradition of taboo, of silence, but the power of their look is extraordinary. They have had to get used to expressing themselves through their eyes. So Alia's attempt to find out her mother's actual role in the palace has to become an investigation. She looks through keyholes, through a crack in the door. Her look is searching for things that she shouldn't see. But when her mother is raped in front of her eyes, her look becomes that of someone who has seen what she should never have to see. It is unbearable to the point that she then refuses to speak any more. After that it's only her look that can bear witness to her feelings, to her fear and her panic. Her contact with

other people is reduced to the tiny nuances of a half look. **At first Alia's look is one of curiosity. It's quite innocent even though it's voyeuristic. Children are, after all, voyeuristic.** Yes, of course, children are voyeuristic. My point here goes far beyond Alia's own particular case. I'm pretty sure there never has been a small girl who hasn't tried to see things that people would rather she didn't. And of course her parents will be the main and available subjects of her investigation. In this sense, Alia is just the same; her curiosity is innocent and typical of an adolescent. She steals images when she can.

But when she becomes a young woman, she starts attracting a voyeuristic look herself. So now we get yet another kind of look.

As soon as Alia grows up and starts to sing she immediately attracts this new look. Before that, the princes paid no attention to her, apart from Sidi Ali, who had always looked at her with affection. When Alia sings Upstairs, suddenly everyone realises that she is now a desirable young woman and a possible mistress for the princes. I had a beautiful, very long shot, which unfortunately I couldn't use because of technical problems in the lab. The shot showed the way everyone present looked at Alia and how each of them responded. It's really a pity that I couldn't use it.

I would like to end with the scene in the kitchen when Khedija comes in having found out that she's pregnant. Once again the shot is long and quite complicated. And, once again, the rhythm changes. At first the women are singing as usual and then a kind of melodrama erupts. But it's not excessive. The camera takes over.

The point is that Khedija's screams affect all the other servants. I wanted to show that for her being a woman has only given her pain. She can't stand her body or her femininity. But all the women take it differently. They identify with her pain but they also understand it as their own. I wanted to show the way that, within their solidarity with Khedija, each one can see her own fate. That was the point of that shot. **But the scene is shot to draw attention to the camera as it records the various reactions of the women. So that we feel ourselves watching the screen, and watching the women, from inside a movie theatre. The camera frames each woman in turn, and the usual rhythm of their work slows down as each becomes absorbed in her own thoughts. As they pause to think, so does the camera – and so does the audience. We are forced to step back from the story, and to think about history.**

'The Silences of the Palace' opens at the ICA on 10 March and is reviewed on page 53 of this issue

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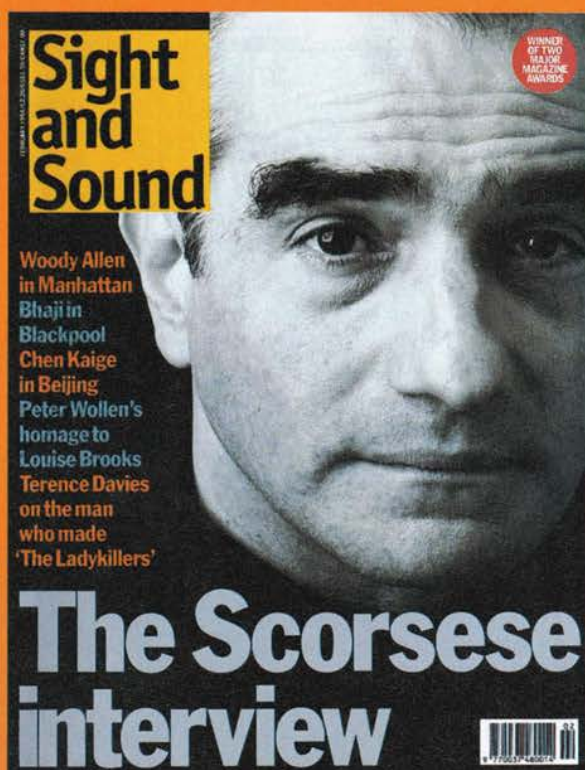
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Darnell Martin's debut 'I Like It Like That' is a humorous 'black ghetto' film which challenges the clichés. Andrea Stuart visited the set and talks with the director

FROM THE BRONX TO BELLISIMA

● In the version of black life that Hollywood executives prefer, hooded figures are always fleeing down grimy poverty-shrouded streets, streets littered with the sordid detritus of inner city life, the inevitable discarded condoms and empty crack vials the marks of squalid encounters and wasted lives. A squad car will perhaps be screeching up outside a menacing tenement block, or else one of the deceptively suburban bungalows of LA's notorious South Central. Regulation-issue steel-cap police boots may be kicking down a door, with arrests to follow, for drugs or perhaps for such gang activities as drive-by shootings. Always there will be guns: Saturday Night Specials, Magnums, even Uzis. And the whole thing will come packaged with the ubiquitous gangsta rap soundtrack.

But do all 'black' films conform to this Hollywood preference? Written three years ago, and commissioned, presumably, during the money-inspired euphoria generated by Mario Van Peebles' *New Jack City* and John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood*, *I Like It Like That* seems on paper to fit the bill. Set in the Bronx, it tells the story of a poor Hispanic family whose lives are rudely shattered when the father is arrested for stealing a TV set during one of New York's legendary power blackouts. It has guns, drugs, shattered marriages, even urban deprivation.

However, it lacks one crucial stereotyped ingredient: despair. "Hollywood has created a whole new genre," remarks the film's 28-year-old writer/director Darnell Martin. "There's comedy, there's drama and then there's 'black cinema'. And white people can go and look at it the way they used to glance through *National Geographic*." But it's a version of black life that Martin just doesn't buy. "A lot of films that depict desperate situations just don't ring true. Because people in desperate situations don't have just one mood. Otherwise they'd go crazy. There has to be humour and a recognition of absurdity or they wouldn't be able to survive."

Not defined by skin colour

In fact, though shuffling the same urban cards as 'new black cinema' directors like Singleton and Mario Van Peebles, Martin has managed to deal an entirely different hand. In contrast to its apparent themes, *I Like It Like That* is suffused with humour, life and joy. Set "against the vibrant and passionate mores of Bronx street life" and (erroneously) marketed as a 'romantic comedy', it is really the story of the coming of age of a young black girl, Lisette (played by Lauren Vélez). Originally and much more aptly entitled *Black Out*, it follows her difficult jour-

ney to adulthood, after the arrest of her immature Puerto Rican husband Chino, when she is forced to cope on her own.

Now solely responsible for three kids, Lisette has to fall back on her wits. She decides to become a model, and enlists the aid of her trans-sexual brother's false tits. When this fails, she wangles her way into a record company, to work for an endearingly amoral A&R man played by Griffin Dunne.

But underneath this Horatio Alger-like tale – girl finds her fortune in the big city – are several sub-plots: a mishap with a winning lottery ticket; her brother's efforts to save for a sex change; the incipient delinquency of the eldest son, Li'l Chino; the grandmother's scheming against Lisette because she's half black, not pure Castilian.

The complexity of the film, seamlessly weaving together so many plot strands and themes, and its ability to make one laugh and cry in the same instant, simply overwhelmed the Columbia executives. In order to make of it something they recognised, they changed the title to *I Like It Like That*. "For them it sounded a bit like *She's Gotta Have It*," says Martin dryly. If her account is anything to go by, her meeting with these studio executives was a scene worthy of Mel Brooks' *The Producers*.

Studio executive: "I know what this film is now – it's *Pretty Woman*!"

Darnell: "Excuse me, Lisette isn't a prostitute." SE: "I get it now! She's kinda Rosie Perez and this film is *Footloose*! It's *Flashdance*!"

D: "No. If you've got to make a comparison this film is [Visconti's] *Bellissima*. And she isn't Rosie Perez, she's Anna Magnani."

She shakes her head. "They're so fucked up they can only define people by gender, ethnicity or skin colour." In fact, despite her racial origins and her one-time job as assistant cinematographer on *Do the Right Thing*, Martin's influences are less Spike Lee than European cinema: "The film's very European structurally, in the way it's shot. I'm thinking specifically Italian cinema. Say a film like [Pietro Germi's] *Seduced and Abandoned* [*Sedotta e abbandonata*, 1963], which is about a very serious subject, looking at the oppression of women in Sicily, a country with a reputation for being misogynistic. And yet the films aren't like that. They present traumatic situations by converting the underlying hysteria into energy and life."

Specifically, she is interested in the way that Italian films of the 50s and 60s treat the women in them. "Look at an actress like Anna Magnani and the roles she had. Basically she plays a man without a dick. Her characters are very sensual,

sexual, powerful. Even if she is a woman in a domestic setting, taking care of kids or whatever, she's a person, she's developed. She can be and do bad things and not be evil. In American cinema a woman who does wrong is either a *femme fatale* or a bitch; she has to be punished in the end." Magnani's vital, full-bodied quality is exactly what Martin hoped to duplicate in Lisette's character, in marked contrast to the insipid depiction of Vélez in the posters for the film. Martin shrugs disgustedly. "They've made her look like some ditzy model, as if nothing is going on in her head."

Streetwise mascot

My first contact with Martin had come at the end of a long hot New York summer in late August 1993. The film was partly being shot on location in the Bronx, in Martin's old neighbourhood around Findlay and 167th Street, and partly in a studio about a half-hour drive out of Midtown. We had arrived on set to find that Jon Seda, who plays Chino, was just leaving, and wouldn't be available for interview all day. Nor would Dunne, who wasn't even shooting that day. Nor (surprisingly) would Martin, but we did speak with Vélez, and also Rita Moreno, made immortal by *West Side Story*. (Someone inadvertently started humming "I wanna live in America": this has apparently happened to Moreno every day of the 30-plus years since *West Side Story* came out.)

Everyone was talking about Tomas Melly, who plays Li'l Chino, Lisette's eldest. Well able to reconcile showbiz and the street, Melly is in many ways the mascot of the film. As he sat around the set in his sleeveless green army vest, a single gold stud in his right ear, his world-weary gaze made him seem like a streetwise 25-year-old in a ten-year-old body. An orphan, he had apparently decided to come to auditions of his own accord when he heard about the casting from a local radio station. Martin had asked him whether he had seen any fights. His response had been as jaded as the reply of an ageing Vietnam vet, and as revealing: "I seen lots of fights."

With the exception of veterans like Dunne and Moreno (and such New York icons as Aids activist – also Robert De Niro's ex – Tookie Smith, who has a cameo), both cast and crew had seemed remarkably young to be making movies. No one in Think Again Productions, the production team, seemed to be over 30: Martin, only briefly glimpsed, hair scraped back, looking very earnest, seemed no older than 15. Seda is an ex-boxer: though he had appeared in Tony Drayzen's 1992 *Zebrahead*, this was his

first leading role. Velez had never been in a major motion picture before.

In the afternoon they were shooting a scene from the beginning of the film, in which the kids are clamouring outside a closed door as the parents argue. There was the anti-climactic feeling common to all film sets: delays, repetition, constant interruption. Kids were crying, food was being laid out for the cast's lunch, and there was a rack of second-hand clothes and knicknacks for sale, including a kitschy pastel picture of a blond Christ in a gilt frame, eyes upturned to the heavens, price \$3.50. The atmosphere was a cross between a car boot sale in darkest Kent and a good-natured amateur dramatic production. Nothing prepared one for the polished film to emerge a year later.

In retrospect, says Martin (late last year), she loved shooting. "I like to have fun on set and was lucky to be with actors who like to have fun too." It seems the crew set up a series of running practical jokes to break the stress of filming. Seda and Velez apparently started a rumour that in a private rehearsal for their love scene, Seda had got carried away and raped Velez. Frantic with worry Martin confronted the pair only to have them dissolve into laughter. Bent on revenge, she set up Seda. "I knew that he was going to Club USA one night, so I organised to have a cop car pull up the next morning on location. Then this girl jumps out, bruised face, eye swollen out to there," (she gestures about six inches in front of her face for emphasis) "screaming, 'He did it. He did it. He raped me!' As the cop is throwing John into the back of the car, John's like shouting. 'Hey, it's a mistake. Call my manager!' And all the kids on the street are saying, 'Hey, no! That guy's an actor!' And then the cop starts reading him his rights: 'You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to know that this is a practical joke.'"

"I'm so baaad!" she chuckles.

Sense of place

The relaxed atmosphere has obviously paid off. The film is beautifully toned, like a long-distance runner whose power is disguised under a deceptively sleek exterior. It manages to discuss any number of issues without ever seeming like an 'issues' film. The trans-sexuality of Jesse Borrego's character Alexis isn't signposted, for example – it's just a part of the tapestry of everyday city life. "It was sort of based on a friend of my sister. I wanted to create a character who had a very strong sense of herself, who didn't define herself as being someone's mother or someone's lover. Maybe the strongest, easiest feminist would be a man," she muses, "because



Coming of age: Lauren Vélez as Lisette

men are born knowing that they have to be something to themselves, while women are successful in relation to others."

The film's other secret weapon is its extraordinary sense of place. "Environment really affects me. And I can only talk about a place by talking about the specifics of that place. The apartment was my apartment when I was little. It was hard to find a block that hadn't been renovated recently. It had to be so specific. Brightly coloured paint was the extent of our interior decoration, so the walls had to be painted in these brightly coloured high-gloss paint, and they had to have that layer of dust that dulls the patina. And the floors had to be those wooden boards, which had marks where the kids had dug up with bobby pins."

It's the kind of debut that film critics dream of. It has the high-octane immediacy of a superior pop video (with a great Latin-influenced soundtrack), and the convoluted intricacy and eroticism of a Brazilian soap opera; Douglas Sirk meets *La Bohème*. "It's very operatic," she grins, but in truth her own background has a certain operatic quality, and the film has more than a touch of the autobiographical about it. She denies that Lisette is her ("She's much nicer than me," she laughs), but she herself was brought up in just the kind of Bronx neighbourhood the film depicts. "I learnt my optimism from my mother. A lot of times we'd be near the point of eviction. One year – it was just before Christmas, so we knew we wouldn't be evicted until after the 25th – she came in and

said, 'We've got \$50. It's not enough for the rent, but I've got an idea. Why don't we go to the Holiday Inn and swim in the pool!'"

Such optimism swept Martin from the Barnard School for Girls (where her mother had blagged her a place) to Fordham University, and to Sarah Lawrence College and then graduate film school at New York University. She took all the usual deadend jobs, including bartending, while she worked on advertisements and pop videos. Writing all this time, she made *Suspect*, the acclaimed short film which got her into the Sundance Festival, and also worked on Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*. In 1992, armed with *Suspect* and a final script draft of what was then *Black Out*, she went to Columbia, who had a couple of years earlier given a start to Singleton, when he was fresh out of film school. Finally, a whole year after she came to them, they agreed to commission *I Like It Like That* – on the back, one suspects, of the commercial success of the first wave of 'new black cinema'.

With typically self-congratulatory studio promotion, Martin was touted during the pre-publicity as the first black woman to make a "major studio movie". This tokenist and misleading tag is one she resents. "I wasn't," she sighs exhaustedly: she may be the first Afro-American, but Euzhan Palcy – who is French Afro-Caribbean – had already directed *A Dry White Season* (with Brando and Donald Sutherland), while black women directors like Julie Dash have been working in the independent sector for years.

I ask her how the film has been marketed in America since its launch.

"Very badly. The reviews have been great, but still there hasn't been a single poster for the film around NY. There is no campaign. Nor will they let me take over and market it myself." She feels that in their befuddlement, Columbia have failed to capture the appropriate audience for the film. "In NY it's playing to upscale audiences thanks to the support of the critics. But when I test screened it, it went through the roof with the kids. 13- and 14-year-olds were coming up to me and saying, 'That's my life.'"

For the future, her verdict on working with Columbia is flatly unequivocal: "Never again. I don't have a picture deal but I'm working on a script that I'm really excited about. Everyone who has read it says that the writing is tighter than *I Like It Like That*. It's a very different story, about a family being haunted, with a very dark ending. Whoever I do it with, though," she insists ominously, "will have to be able to respect the integrity of the product."

I Like It Like That opened on 3 February and is reviewed on page 39 of this issue

HARD AND FAST

Mike Figgis on his new film 'Leaving Las Vegas' – and on film music.
Set report by Manohla Dargis

● I find Mike Figgis behind a warehouse in the Los Angeles County suburb of Glendale, finishing his latest film *Leaving Las Vegas*. Seated before an artfully arranged wedge of bright green turf, Figgis looks remarkably composed for someone busy cramming a feature-length shoot with feature-length demands into a meagre four-and-a-half weeks of production. With the end in sight, Figgis is prepping for the night's work: inserts for a scene in which Nicolas Cage as Ben, a dying screenwriter, sets light on the family lawn to a stash of mementos, pictures and sundry bits and pieces of his life.

Figgis and I start to exchange hellos, but our awkward words are drowned out by the roar of an immense garbage truck, as it pulls into the

adjoining parking lot. On the truck are emblazoned the letters BFI. Figgis grins: "That always gives me a laugh."

Leaving Las Vegas is his sixth feature in just over a decade. A musician and former actor, he made his directorial debut in 1984 with *The House*, a short for Channel 4. Good notices for it landed him the financing for his first feature, *Stormy Monday*, a saturnine thriller which garnered critical attention and a rendezvous with Hollywood. And ten years later, this has given him both success (*Internal Affairs*) and failure (*Liebestraum*), commercially, as well as a palpable disgust for the American movie industry.

It's another beautiful California day, and I'm inside the stifling warehouse listening to the



Sera On The Strip

Elisabeth Shue plays Sera, a Vegas prostitute. I first met her seven years ago when I thought I was about to direct my first American film, *'Hot Spot'* (eventually directed by one D. Hopper). She did a great reading and I remembered her. There's a freshness to her performance which is extraordinary, probably because she's never been invited to do this kind of role before. Last year I made

a documentary about Vivienne Westwood who'd said that she would design some clothes for this film. Time ran out so Vivienne turned me loose in her shop and told me to take whatever I wanted. I carried the clothes over myself and hoped that I wasn't going to be searched at LAX. Thank you Vivienne. I think that her wardrobe is very useful for Elisabeth in defining some aspects of the character.

All of the exteriors were shot on the new Kodak fast stock and the locations were chosen for their spectacular available light. The result was exactly as I'd hoped. We shot Super-16 on two Aatons and I operated whenever I could whilst trying to stay out of Declan Quinn's way. We got plenty of coverage without having to resort to the formula of wide shot, medium shot and close-up. I shot Super-16 in order to get as far away as

possible from the world of crisp, perfect, over-lit 35mm. I'm so tired of this bland perfection in cinema today and it puzzles me greatly why young directors aspire to it. I'd have thought they'd be stampeding towards impressionism. Declan and Waldemar Kalinowski (the production designer) and I spent a great deal of time talking about this and I encouraged them both to move away from convention.

aeroplanes and the hum coming off two nearby freeways. "He's really uptight," the director's personal assistant had whispered, explaining that Figgis will come over and talk while he's getting a back massage. (Ever the gentleman, he keeps his shirt on.) Apart from spasms of pain crossing his face as the knots are worked out, Figgis seems not the least bit anxious. If anything, he looks rather pleased, even when the news is less than happy. So how does he feel? "Fantastic, never felt better."

Still, there are the incidental things. Figgis readily admits that the sound for this film has been proving tricky. "We're going with it," he says. "By using the long lens we can get close-miked. The sound will be a problem, for sure,

but I'm not going to loop, so we're going to have to live with it." It seems that the story behind the story of *Leaving Las Vegas* is one of compromise: there may have been other choices, but this was the only one that made sense. We're in this warehouse – lousy acoustics and all – because Figgis wanted to get this picture done on his own terms.

"When I decided that maybe this was something I wanted to do," he says, "I laid down certain ground rules for myself, because of the whole studio experience. I saw it as a turning point. I was really dissatisfied with film-making; the way things were going, I wouldn't have cared if I had never done another feature. I wanted to go back to a sort of funkier way of

working, so I told myself that I would restrict the budget, initially to about two million – it went to three-and-a-half, but that includes everybody, Nicolas, me, the lot. Everybody's doing it for scale, literally."

Figgis wrote the script for *Leaving Las Vegas* from John O'Brien's semi-autobiographical novel. The story is almost unbearably raw, and tracks the final weeks in the life of Ben, an alcoholic screenwriter going down fast and hard. When he's cut loose by his agent, he decides to move to Las Vegas and drink himself to death. Once in Vegas, however, he finds his plans for self-destruction waylaid by Sera, a prostitute played by Elisabeth Shue. In spite of the squalor, Figgis believes the film is very much ►



The Hole You're In

Ben checks into a Vegas motel called The Whole Year Inn, because it seems like an appropriate place to die. Then he meets Sera and she turns him around – for awhile. Waldemar has been the production designer on all my American films and I love working with him. We seem to be in synch on most things and we don't have to spend too much time talking. We decided before the film started that wall colours were

going to be crucial for the cinematography. I said that although it was very low budget he could use as much paint as he wanted. He found an old warehouse and we built all the interior sets there. I like working in that way. It's like having your own studio without having to deal with the immensely dulling effect of working in a real studio. There was no waste on the film. Sets were designed for camera. The materials were recycled from another film.



Las Vegas

The city took exception to the script. It seems that in the new family-friendly environment there are no prostitutes or alcoholics in the casinos. So no one would give us an interior to shoot in and we had to go to Laughlin, which is about an hour away from Vegas and where the average age of the punters was about 80. Apparently a lot of them die at the machines, and are quietly whisked out of a back entrance so as to not upset the survivors. The Vegas

police also have the right to ban you from filming on the streets. But they were looking for references to hard drugs and the Mob, and luckily for me Ben is an alcoholic and Yuri is in the Russian Mafia. Whew! This image is of the two lovers outside Bally's Casino. Those illuminated poles change colour in time to piped muzak. Continuity became a bit of an issue. We didn't have permission to stop the traffic so the actors have to compete with the real world – no bad thing from time to time.



Flashback

Julian Sands plays Yuri, a Russian pimp on the run from his fellow expatriates. He and Sera have a history together and he still has a hold on her which is part violent and part something else. This is a flashback to a time when he cut her on her bum to keep her in his power. In the book John O'Brien really captured the strange dynamic between them, completely avoiding the

clichés of pimp and hooker, so adapting the book was a joy. I've been faithful to his intention, I think. It's a pity he died. I never got to meet him.

Julian Sands is an actor without inhibition. He's an under-rated performer and an excellent gardener. As a joke I told him he should learn all his lines in Russian – and he did, which turned out to be a good thing. He's excellent in the film.



Violence

Three nice, middle-class college boys go to Vegas for the weekend. One of them has never been laid and the other two put him up to picking up a hooker. They get very stoned and decide they want to video the event. Sera has fallen in love with Ben and this makes her vulnerable. Her radar is slow and she doesn't see the signs and things get very violent. Very difficult

scene to do. To find that balance between exploitation and realism. The day started uncomfortably and never really got beyond that. Elisabeth got very upset the first time one of the boys touched her. There's no getting away from the perversity of filming sexual violence. The scene is strong and tragic. Sera doesn't report the attack to the police. She tends her own wounds.

SCRIPT EXTRACT: 'LEAVING LAS VEGAS'

IN BEN'S ROOM, NIGHT:

(Ben and Sera are both in bed drinking.)

SERA: So, Ben, what brings you to Las Vegas? Business convention? (They both laugh and Ben hands her the bottle.)

BEN: No, I came here to drink... myself... you know...

SERA: To death?

BEN: Yes, that's right. (He looks at her, she at him, not sure whether to believe him or not.)

BEN: (continuing) I cashed in all of my money, paid my AMEX card, gonna sell the car tomorrow.

SERA: How long's it gonna take, for you to drink yourself to death?

BEN: I think about four weeks, and I've got enough for about 250 to 300 dollars a day.

SERA: Yes... that should do it. What am I?

A luxury?

BEN: Yeah. And your meter just ran out.

◀ a story of doomed love, in the manner, say, of *Anna Karenina*. "In order to get through so much romantic, sentimentalised garbage," he explains, "it needs to be a tragedy." As for O'Brien, he killed himself a few months before production began.

"This is the strongest film-making experience I've ever had," says Figgis, "and the best performances I've ever gotten out of any actors. I think the script is really good because the book was good. I think it's a fantastic story. The dialogue is incredible and Cage is a kind of phenomenon, I think he's surprised himself in this. Certainly he surprised me. And Elisabeth Shue is a kind of revelation. She's one of the best actresses I've ever worked with, which I always suspected because I've known her for a while."

Today Figgis is guiding Shue through what is plainly one of the toughest scenes in a very tough movie. Sera, having argued bitterly with Ben, goes to turn a trick at a seedy Vegas motel. Dazed from her fight with Ben and off her guard, she walks into a room with three drunk frat boys, where she is subsequently gang raped. At one point during our chat, Figgis is asked by one of the actor-rapists if he can take his 'nude' underwear off during the assault. Fig-

gis responds politely: Elisabeth, he says, would really prefer not to have the man's genitals rubbing against her.

The rape scene is supposed to take place on a closed set, but Figgis invites me to watch. Perched in front of a video monitor, he has the look of a man possessed. All around him, the young crew and cast settle into place, the lights blazing down as the message of the music begins to throb: *mayday mayday*... Shue enters the set, one of nearly a dozen room-like structures that fill the warehouse, and begins. Figgis has already rehearsed the scene a few times, but now is the time to get it right. "I'll tell you what my feeling is," he tells his players, as he disappears into the make-believe motel. "You're going to have to take your time." And still later, "Remember, take your time, don't rush it."

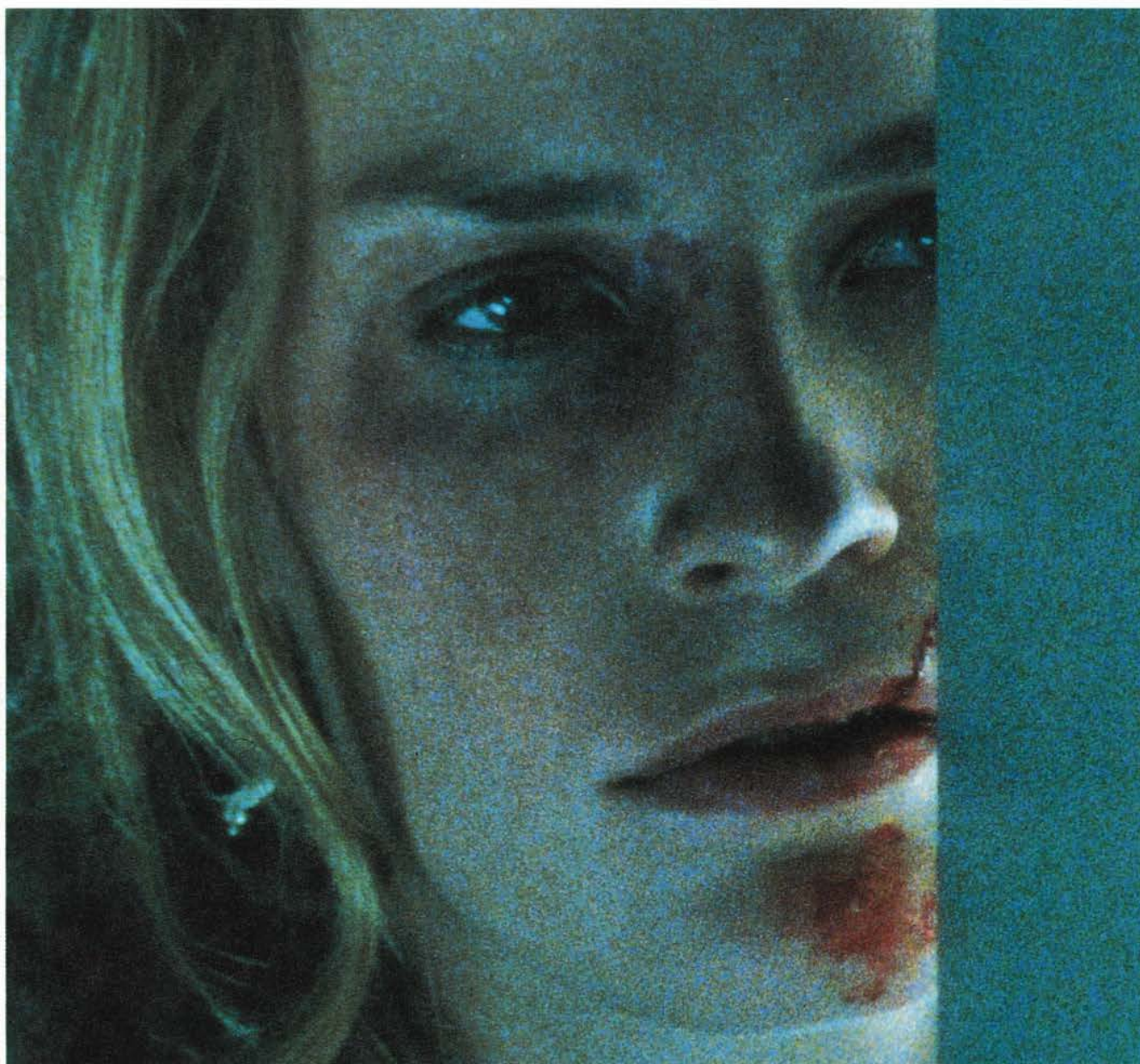
Figgis describes, dissects and analyses his actors' performances for them, telling them what went well and what didn't. He's unfailingly gentle with them, mindful of their unease about these roles: he knows they want it to be over. As for the director, it's just as clear he wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

For years, Figgis has been composing the scores to his own movies, and has even built a

music studio back home in England. Now he's pushing the process further, taking control of the films themselves.

"If you don't learn your lesson" says Figgis, "which is either you fit in or you don't fit in, then you're stupid. I hold no bitterness toward the studios, not really." There's a slight pause. "Well, a little bit. It's not that I don't fit in, there's just too much stupidity to deal with, it's a waste of time. You have a choice, it's very, very simple. You accept, say, two million dollars a picture as a director. It's not so difficult to earn that kind of money. If you really care about your ratings, make the right choices, and behave, then you can be actually quite rich and buy whatever cars you like, houses, whatever. But if you choose to be a film-maker then that's not going to work."

"I don't believe anybody who says they can make that happen. There are too many compromises, too many times when you eat your own bile, because of some complete moron from the studio who wouldn't know a film if you beat them to death with it, wouldn't know an editing technique, wouldn't know a score." The words gush out, and a little bitterness begins to sound like a lot. "Your impulse is, actually,





Love and ruins: Elisabeth Shue as Sera the prostitute, in Mike Figgis' 'Leaving Las Vegas'

to put them against the wall and knock their teeth down their throats, because it's such an insult for amateurs to tell film-makers what to do. They don't know a thing. They know a little bit about the marketing, the backbiting, but that's about it. They know some agents in town, they know some actors, they know some executives – and they delude themselves that that's some kind of equation for understanding film-making.

"It's always been that way. You come in as an outsider, you make a couple of films, and think that your goodwill, or your talent, will win the day. But they're not interested in that. There's no interest in a film being good or bad, it merely has to do with control. Initially they leave you alone, and seem to respect you, and then the more time you spend there the less polite they are – familiarity breeds contempt – to the point where they'll be just downright rude. But they'll come lick your ass if your film opens with seven million dollars." As the assistant director calls him back to work from interview and backrub, Figgis smiles and stretches: the pain is definitely gone.

Figgis on his film scores

The House (UK 1984)

This came out of a performance piece called *Slow Fade* that was commissioned by Channel 4. On stage I used three Super-8 projectors and slides and live music as well as performance. In the film I incorporated as much of the music from the stage performance as possible, in particular four songs.

Stormy Monday (UK 1987)

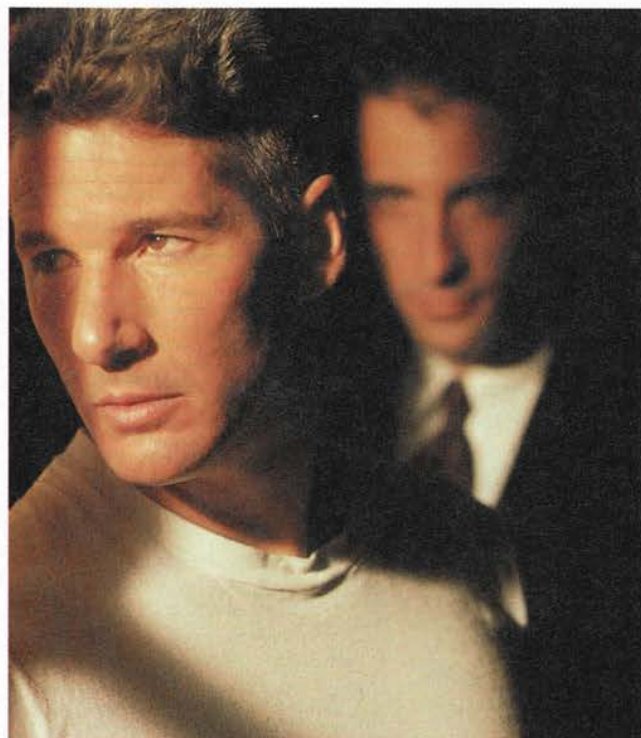
I went for a jazz score but was totally influenced by Morricone's *Once Upon a Time In America*. There was a lot of live music in the film from Don Weller and the Krakow Jazz Ensemble (who were in fact the People Band). On the score there is great solo work (improvised) by Ed Dean (guitars) and Ray Warleigh (alto sax). I do all the trumpet work, and everything else was done on various keyboards. Most of the ideas were laid down during editing at my small studio at home on a four-track and then re-recorded later, once the film was locked. I always preview with a full, original-temp score. In retrospect I sometimes prefer elements of the original temp. I persuaded B. B. King to record the titletrack, a career first for him.

Internal Affairs (USA 1989)

This was the first time I became aware that studios get nervous if they don't control the music. I ended up working with two composers of their choice. But the experience was a good one and they did exactly what I asked. Before they came on board I'd already done the temp and previewed it with the film. This time on four-track cassette with a keyboard and an early Akai sampler. We went for a Cuban rhythmic feel and used incredible session musicians in LA. Most of it was improvised to picture, a very good experience. It's a very dark score, but I'm happy with it.

Liebestraum (USA 1990)

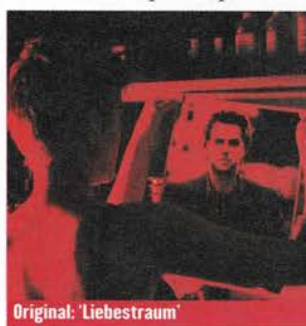
Here I was trying some new things. I wanted to get away from the 'cue' effect. I wanted the music to integrate with the sound and sometimes be indistinguishable from it. So it's more or less wall-to-wall. I really experimented with the track textures, using as many tracks as possible but keeping the result way down in the overall final mix. Secondly,



A dark world: Richard Gere and Andy Garcia in 'Internal Affairs'

using a sampler, I took things down so many octaves that they became almost inaudible, but still retained a strong presence. It has to be heard in a good theatre or on headphones. I had big problems transferring it on to optical and none of the sound specialists in town could help. Austin Ince at Snake Ranch co-produced this with me (as he'd done in *Stormy Monday*). I think it's the most original of all the scores I've done.

Mara (HBO short, USA 1991)
My favourite score of all time is Miles Davis' *Lift to the Scaffold*. *Mara* was shot in six nights in Paris and the score was a little homage to Miles. I did everything at home on a four-track reel-to-reel and used flugelhorn and electric piano with some strings and percussion. One track each! All the cues were done live to VHS playback. Very low tech! I loved it. HBO hated it and replaced it. I hated their score. Things got ugly for a while and then I decided to be philosophical



Original: 'Liebestraum'

about it and move on to –

Mr Jones (USA 1994)

I didn't want to direct unless I could score and a compromise was arrived at – once again that of co-composer. I used Anthony Marinelli, who'd worked on *Internal Affairs* with me. We did a score together, which I liked. Unfortunately we'd elected to deal with the script's manic depression in the music. We were both fired as soon as it was legal to do so. Jack Nitzsche was brought in, which was a strange choice because he's also pretty dark (but he'd done *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* – geddit?). He was quickly replaced by Maurice Jarre.

The Browning Version (UK/USA 1994)

My original plan was to use quite contemporary scoring – jazzy in fact. Albert Finney as a cross between Gerry Mulligan and Sinatra. I did a temp and wrote a nice little theme – but was fired before the preview. The finished score is fine but I've come to the conclusion that I'm no big fan of music that leads the audience by the nose. Whenever the subject of music comes up with the producers I feel guilty. Like walking through the green channel. I feel like I'm selling dirty postcards to the wrong people. So my hopes rest on –

Leaving Las Vegas (UK/France/USA 1995)
That nice little theme I wrote for *The Browning Version*? It's working beautifully for this sex'n'booze love tragedy.

Obscurities

Compiled by Bob Baker

1993

In December, Yevgeny Gabilovich, scriptwriter for Pudovkin, Romm, Yutkevich; Axel Corti, Austrian director of *The Refusal*; Mack David, lyricist (*Cinderella*, *Cat Ballou*).

January

Cesar Romero, variously Latin lounge lizard, the Cisco Kid and The Joker in TV's *Batman*; Heather Sears, whose characters usually started out virginal though seldom finished that way (*Story of Esther Costello*, *Room at the Top*); Jim Booth, New Zealand producer of morbid farces (*Meet the Feebles*, *Braindead*); Vittorio Mezzogiorno, who appeared in films by Rosi, Tarkovsky, Herzog; Samuel Bronston; Esther Ralston, "The American Venus" of silent movies; Harry Nilsson, singer/songwriter (*Midnight Cowboy*, the Altman *Popeye*); Martin Kosleck, character actor specialising in mad doctors and Nazi beasts; Jean-Louis Barrault; Frances Gifford, 40s starlet, of cultish interest via her serial *Jungle Girl*; Telly Savalas, oily movie villain translated by TV (*Kojak*) to the ranks of the just; Oliver Smith, designer, mostly for Broadway, occasionally for Hollywood (*The Band Wagon*, *Oklahoma!*); Claude Akins, 50s heavy (the man in the jail in *Rio Bravo*) who later cultivated a more civilised image; Pierre Boule, novelist (*Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Planet of the Apes*).

February

Guy Lefranc, director of vehicles for such stars as Eddie Constantine, Darryl Cowl; Harold Schneider, producer, often associated with Jack Nicholson (*Five Easy Pieces*, *Hoffa*); Joseph Cotten; Ken G. Hall, pioneering Australian film maker; Jarmila Novotna, soprano, Ophul's *Verkaufte Braut*, non-singing in Zinnemann's *The Search*; William Conrad, another heavy turned TV lawman (*Cannon*); Lou Bunin, puppeteer, producer of the 1949 *Alice in Wonderland*; Derek Jarman; Gordon Spauling, veteran Canadian cinéaste (*Rhapsody in Two Languages* and, from 1932 to 1955, the Canadian *Cameos* series); Derrick Knight, documentarist, successively with GPO, Army and Shell film units; Dinah Shore, popular singer of the 40s, contributing numbers to *Up in Arms*, *The Paleface*.

March

Manmohan Desai, Hindi producer/director of big budget extravaganzas; Walter Kent, song composer for such 40s ephemera as *Meet Miss Bobby Socks*, *Earl Carroll's Vanities*; Tengiz Abuladze, Georgian film maker (*Magdana's Donkey*, *The Invocation*); John Candy; Melina Mercouri; Devika Rani, early Hindi star (of movies by husband Himansu Rai), later head of studio Bombay Talkies; Mai Zetterling; Rick Lomba, documentary film maker; MacDonald Carey, stolid lead, notably for Losey (*The Lawless*, *The Damned*); Walter Lantz, whose studio begat Woody Woodpecker; Igor Aleinikov, avant-garde film maker; Giulietta Masina; Paul Griaumont, French animator; Bill Travers, strapping co-star of lions, otters, elephants.

Fernando Rey (born 20 January 1917) Courtly lechery was Fernando Rey's forte. His neat grey beard was that of a grandee, or an old goat. Had Don Juan stood up the Stone Guest and survived into late middle-age, suave and world-weary but with fire still smouldering in his loins, Rey would have made ideal casting. Few actors could better suggest the sly perversities lurking behind a respectable facade.

His background was suitably establishment, being that of a distinguished military family. But his father, a general, had fought for the Republicans in the Civil War, as had Rey himself. He had planned to be an architect, but architects had to be politically sound, which actors didn't. With his elegant cello of a voice he was soon in demand for dubbing, impersonating Olivier, John Mills, Bogart and Tyrone Power, and also as an extra, typecast as dignitaries: "I was The Black Tie Type," as he observed.

It took Buñuel to bring out the satyr beneath the evening-dress, casting him in *Viridiana* as the wicked uncle who rapes the naive young heroine. As Rey rose to become the most internationally famous of Spanish actors, he worked with some classy directors - Welles, Altman, Minnelli, Carol Reed - and reached a wider audience as Gene Hackman's opponent, Frog One, in the two *French Connection* films. He was even considered for the title role in *The Godfather*.

But it was with Buñuel that he was always associated, though they made only four

films together - perhaps because he so palpably incarnated the director's alter ego. In Rey Buñuel found the perfect embodiment of his love-hate affair with his own class, the Spanish *haute bourgeoisie*. No matter how lecherous, predatory or despicable he gets, Rey never forfeits Buñuel's sympathy, nor ours. At the end of *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, Rey, the most discreetly charming of all, is the only one allowed to finish his meal. Philip Kemp

Lily Damita (born 19 September 1901) took her name - or so she claimed - from an incident at Biarritz when the King of Spain inquired lecherously after "la damita del maiollo rojo" (the girl in the red swimsuit). The story has just the right mix of high-life and hokum to be true. Damita's on-screen persona was dazzling but never quite credible - as if dreamt up by a Hollywood publicist overdosing on notions of European glamour.

Born Lily Carré in Bordeaux, she got into movies via a riot of ooh-la-la cliché - bathing-beauty contests, posing for sexy postcards and starring at the Casino de Paris (where she took over from Mistinguett). Small wonder that she was cast as coquettes and vamps in half a dozen French films, and as many in Germany. Pabst used her in an ephemeral comedy, *Man spielt nicht mit der Liebe*, but it was Michael Curtiz who made her a European star as *Das Spielzeug von Paris* (it means - what else? - *The Plaything of Paris*).

Spotted by Sam Goldwyn, Damita was whisked off to Hollywood to partner Ronald Colman. Her contract vetoed marriage, but this hardly cramped her style. To the joy of the columnists, she embarked on several shamelessly public affairs, one of them with Prince Louis Ferdinand of Germany. "I will never marry royalty," she announced. "They are too self-centred and so am I."

Such cavortings ruled Damita out as a serious actress in the eyes of the studios. Given the chance, she could fizz deliciously in comedy: she easily held her own in Raoul Walsh's raucous *The Cock-Eyed World*, and her sensual wit graced Frank Tuttle's *This is the Night* (Cary Grant's screen debut). Very occasionally, as in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, there were hints of deeper dramatic potential; in repose, her face took on a dark-eyed, pensive beauty. But Hollywood, unnerved by her frank eroticism, preferred to shunt her into French-language versions of American films.

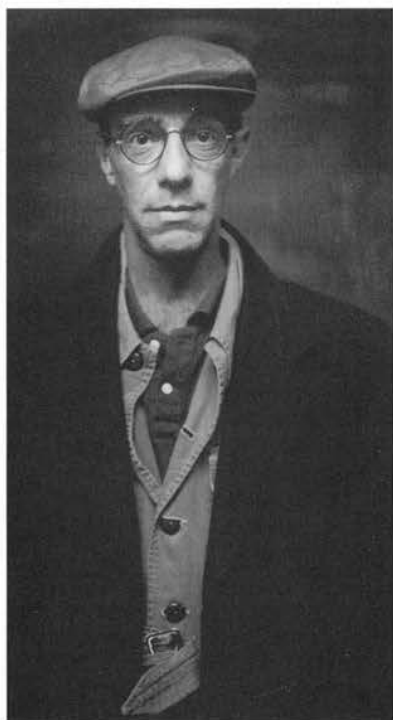
In 1935 she married a young newcomer from Tasmania on the brink of stardom. Errol Flynn, ten years her junior and a million years less sophisticated, treated her warily and called her "Tiger Lil". Their marriage was brief and tempestuous; by the time it came to an end, so had Damita's film career. If she had regrets on either count, she never paraded them. She had too much style for that. Philip Kemp

April

Andrew Britton, critic with *Movie* and other magazines; Frank Wells, president of Walt Disney Co.; Marlon T. Riggs, whose films addressed black and/or gay issues; Nikolai Kryuchkov, actor in Boris Barnet movies, exemplar of the noble proletarian; Rudolf Hrusinsky, distinctive Czech actor (*Capricious Summer*, *The Cremator*); Claude Heymann, associate of Renoir, Buñuel, Fejos, director in his own right (*Victor, L'île des veuves*); Michael Carreras, son of Hammer supremo Sir James, writer/director of a variety of Hammer product, presider over the



Jean-Louis Barrault: a French master of theatre and cinema



Derek Jarman



Mai Zetterling



John Candy

company's dissolution; Jean Carmet, familiar support in lightweight comedies, working-class victim elsewhere (*Violette Nozière*, *Germinal*); Sidney Safir, executive, independent film salesman, handling *The African Queen*, *The Deer Hunter*; Lynne Frederick, angelic-looking teenager of early 70s (*The Amazing Mr. Blunden*, *Phase IV*), litigious widow of Peter Sellers; Ferdinando Scarfiotti, designer for Visconti, Bertolucci.

May

Imre Gyöngyössi, director/scriptwriter (*Palm Sunday*, *The Revolt of Job*); Joe Layton, choreographer, director of TV 'specials'; Ray Elton, cameraman who shot *Miranda*, *Last Holiday*; George Peppard; Rupert Haselden, TV writer (*Raspberry Ripple*), in charge of production at Columbia-British (*The Dresser*) for a few years in the 80s; Murray Spivack, Oscar-winning sound engineer, from *King Kong* to *Hello Dolly*; Timothy Carey, comprehensively evil-looking heavy, the sniper in *The Killing*, the cockroach-squasher in *Paths of Glory*; Gilbert Roland, suavely masculine, south-of-the-border romantic lead; Royal Dano, gaunt, sad-eyed beanpole, a tall Elisha Cook; Andrew Brown, television producer (*Rock Follies*, *Prick up your Ears*); Phani Majumdar, veteran Indian director; Alain Cuny, eerie French, or possibly Martian, player, the husband in *Les Amants*, the suicide in *La Dolce Vita*; Henry Morgan, i.e. the comedic one, radio star of the 40s (*So This is New York*); Forsyth Hardy, champion of Scottish film making; Joseph Janni, producer (*Poor Cow*, *Modesty Blaise*, several Schlesingers); Sidney Gilliat.

June

Massimo Troisi, actor (for Ettore Scola), director (*Ricomincio da Tre*); Stephen McNally, second-choice lead, serviceable, unexciting; Johnny Downs, member of Our Gang then minor league singer/hoofer; Peter Graves, i.e. the British one, man about town and *bon viveur*, notably in Wilcox/Neagle productions; Mark McManus, star of TV's long-running detective series *Taggart*; Barry Sullivan, who projected tight-lipped intensity in some vintage films noirs (*Framed*, *Cause for Alarm!*); Dennis Potter; Rudolph Cartier, star TV director of the 50s (1984, *The Quatermass Experiment*); William Marshall, actor (*Calendar Girl*), director (*Adventures of Captain Fabian*), husband of, successively, Michèle Morgan, Micheline Presle, Ginger Rogers; Jack Hannah, cartoon director, 25 years with Disney (*Uncle Donald's Ants*, *Pluto's Christmas Tree*); Henry Mancini; Nadia Gray, 50s Eurostar; Marcel Moudoudji, whose acting (*Nous sommes tous des assassins*) was eclipsed by his singing career; Michel Vitold, luminary of the Comédie Française, supporting player in the cinema (the villainous banker in Franju's *Judex*); Manos Hadjidakis, composer of the catchy *Never on Sunday* theme, as well as scores for Kazan, Makavejev; Yuri Nagibin, scriptwriter (*Dersu Uzala*, the Smoktunovsky *Tchaikovsky*); L. V. Prasad, leading Indian director/producer/actor; Jack Davies, scriptwriter for a succession of British comics (*Convict 99*, *Doctor at Sea*); Fredi Washington, mixed-race actress, inconveniently pigmented for the 30s (the Stahl *Imitation of Life*, *The Emperor Jones*).

July

Maurice Zuberano, odd job man (sketch artist on *Citizen Kane*, supervisor of the opening helicopter shot in *The Sound Of Music*);

Cameron Mitchell, whose characters, whether weak or villainous, seldom survived to the fade-out; Christian-Jaque, eclectic, prolific and at one time prestigious director (*Les Disparus de Saint-Agil*, *Fanfan la Tulipe*); Anita Garvin, funny lady, member of the Hal Roach stock company; Gottfried Reinhardt, producer (*The Red Badge of Courage*) and director (*Town without Pity*); Hans J. Salter, house composer at Universal (*Scarlet Street*, *Man without a Star*); Terry Scott, television comedian, irregular member of Carry On team; Bernard (Lord) Delfont, impresario, head of EMI throughout the 70s; Janis Carter, heroine of 40s B-movies by directors like Henry Levin, William Castle; Guy Brenton, director of short films *Thursday's Children* (with Lindsay Anderson), *The Vision of William Blake*.

August

Innokenty Smoktunovsky, Kozintsev's *Hamlet*; Domenico Modugno, musical comedy star, co-writer/performer of hit song/film *Nel blu dipinto di blu*; Robert Hutton, groomed as Warners' answer to James Stewart, winding up directing *The Slime People*; Peter Cushing; Joan Harrison, long-time associate of Hitchcock, distinguished producer in her own right (*Phantom Lady*, *Ride the Pink Horse*); Henri Calef, director of initial promise (*Jericho*, *Les Chouans*) and subsequently of numerous conventional policiers; Aleksander Petrovic, film maker/politician (*Happy Gypsies*, *Migrations*); Zoltán Fábri, respected Hungarian director of the 50s (*Professor Hannibal*, *The Last Goal*); Fred Griffiths, essence of Cockney sparrerdom, discovered by Humphrey Jennings for *Fires were Started*; Lindsay Anderson.

September

James Aubrey, supremo at CBS Television 1959-65 and at MGM 1969-73; James Clavell, unpredictable writer (*King Rat*) and director (*The Last Valley*); Duccio Tessari, director of *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, a title encapsulating his prolific career and, according to Pauline Kael, much else besides; Dennis Morgan, affable, lightweight hero of musicals (*The Desert Song*) and westerns (*Cheyenne*); Wolf Donner, critic, head of Berlin Film Festival; Patrick O'Neal, character actor of the lean and sardonic school (*In Harm's Way*, *Castle Keep*); Jessica Tandy, whose late-flowering screen career brought her an Oscar for *Driving Miss Daisy*; Tom Ewell, showcase for comic inadequacy, as when confronted with Monroe (*The Seven Year Itch*) or Mansfield (*The Girl Can't Help It*); Dolly Haas, popular German star of the early 30s in films by Litvak, Ozep, who relocated to the UK halfway through the decade; Iris Adrian, who could chew gum and crack wise at the same time; Jule Styne, song composer of numerous standards, for Hollywood (*Three Coins in the Fountain*) and Broadway (*Bells are Ringing*); Arthur Krim, tycoon, founder of Orion Pictures; Madeleine Renaud, wife/partner of Jean-Louis Barrault, star of films by Grémillon, Ophüls, Duras; Robert Bloch, novelist (*Psycho*) and scriptwriter (horrors for Castle, Francis); Harry Saltzman, partner with Tony Richardson in *Woodfall* (*Look back in Anger*) and with Cubby Broccoli in Eon (the Bonds); Lina Basquette, dancer/actress, celebrated as DeMille's 'Godless Girl'.

Terence Young (born 20 June 1915) Shanghai was on his birth certificate, Cap d'Antibes was the address on his stationery and his wife was an Italian starlet. If any cultural ►



Marlon T. Riggs



Giulietta Masina

◀ context could be deduced from his work, one could only call it that of the mid-Atlantic crowd-pleaser. Only that faintly supercilious, lord-of-the-manor physiognomy hinted at more specific origins – so clearly, if Terence Young is to be called a 'British' director, the most quizzical of inverted commas need to be clamped around the word. Notably un-British, at least for his generation, was his absolute unembarrassability. No other director in the world could claim a Victor Mature Trilogy, while *The Klansman* and *Inchon* are both legends in the cinema of un-selfconscious absurdity. And yet...

There's a hypothesis to the effect that one way a worthwhile director can be identified is by the presence in their filmography of at least one title that disconcerts, because they couldn't possibly have made it; *Corridor of Mirrors*, a mix of imagination, self-pity and mysticism, is Young's contribution to the argument. *They Were Not Divided*, a romanticised account of his service with the Guards Armoured Division stands out in a different way: the only instance where one of his films feels directed *con amore*. And this most box office-conscious of film-makers defied (most) commercial precedent to concoct *Black Tights*, a ballet movie which confirmed certain Powell-ian parallels worth pursuing at length. But mostly Young set out to attract audiences on the broadest front and when he succeeded, he did so massively. He was the ideal director for Ian Fleming – one rootless cynic adapting the work of another. His three Bonds (*Dr No*, *From Russia with Love*, *Thunderball*) were among the best.

In its component parts his career was all thesis and antithesis: the bland and the outrageous, the conventional and the aberrant, the inhibited and the flamboyant. Before the War Office intervened he was set to direct Olivier in *Henry V*: an intriguing attraction at the Cinema des Fantômes, though it's unlikely this would have changed anything that happened subsequently. It's clear that Young couldn't detach himself fast enough from mainstream, British-based, British-oriented material: the flight from registers perfectly. It's the flight to that has remained problematical.

Bob Baker

October

Heinz Rühmann, protean player, often humorous, who failed to find much of an audience outside Germany; James Hill, documentarist turned story-teller (*Born Free*, *A Study in Terror*); Maya Bulgakova, who appeared in *Turbulent Years*, Shepitko's *Wings*; Monja Danischewsky, Ealing stalwart, as publicist, associate producer (*Whisky Galore!*) and/or writer; Jean Dasté, hero of *L'Atalante*, in middle age supporting player for Resnais, Truffaut; Martha Raye, super-charged singer/comic, unlikely co-star of Chaplin in *Monsieur Verdoux*; Sergei Bondarchuk; Burt Lancaster; Raul Julia; Mildred Natwick, character player, brisk, anti-glamorous (*The Long Voyage Home*); Andrew Miller-Jones, television producer, instigator in 1952 of *Panorama*, co-founder of Guild of TV Producers and Directors.

Benny Lee (born 17 March 1935) They say that if you can remember the 60s you weren't there. Working at the old Lee Kensal Road Studios was a bit like that, a special time and a special place in the history of British cinema. Benny Lee, film-lighting technician



Terence Young



Burt Lancaster



Raul Julia



Sebastian Shaw



Pauline Murray

and co-founder of Lee Electrics, was a buccaneering free spirit who strode through the facilities area of the film industry in a colourful and supportive way and provided a facility that enabled some of us to give substance to our dreams. When no other studio in town would give us space to make *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, with the Sex Pistols, it was John and Benny Lee who gave me an office at Kensal Road. They took this generosity and shrewdness with them when they went on to bigger and better things at Wembley and Shepperton. I had the pleasure of making *Insignificance* at Lee Wembley, surely a facility with a unique atmosphere.

Benny was of the old school – working hard, playing hard, no job too small. The easily recognised cream and brown Lee vans were always to be seen on the streets of London. He was a larger than life character who will be sorely missed. *Jeremy Thomas*

November

Noah Beery Jr, perennial sidekick, hero's helper to a succession of stars; Shorty Rogers, jazz musician, arranger/performer on soundtracks of *The Wild One*, *Man with the Golden Arm*; Joseph Hazen, lawyer turned tycoon, Hal Wallis's partner-in-chief; Cab Calloway, bandleader, cinematically a professional guest star; Michael Grimes, designer for British television and latterly for continental movies (by Goretta, Pinheiro); Lionel Stander, gruff-voiced gargoyle, livener-up of many a dull scene; William Ellis Teas, one-off star for Russ Meyer (*The Immoral Mr. Teas*).

December

Harry Horner, big budget designer (*The Little Foxes*), low-budget director (*Beware, My Lovely*); Gian Maria Volonté; Alun Owen, writer of *The Criminal*, *A Hard Day's Night*, over 70 TV plays; Antonio Carlos Jobim, composer (with Luis Bonfá) of the samba rhythms animating *Black Orpheus*; Norman Beaton, leading black British player (*Black Joy*, much TV); Lilia Skala, refined-looking character player (*Lilies of the Field*, *Roseland*); Neil Hartley, producer of most of the Woodfall output; Julie Haydon, blonde semi-star of the 30s (*The Scoundrel*) who eventually quit Hollywood for Broadway; Robert Emhardt, heavyweight heavy, the Mr Big (in every sense) of *Underworld USA*; Frank Thring, distinctive Australian-born support (*The Vikings*, *El Cid*); Woody Strode, prototype black he-man (*Sergeant Rutledge*, *Spartacus*).

Sebastian Shaw (born 29 May 1903) and **Pauline Murray** (born 30 August 1922) By an unhappy coincidence, both the leading players of Andrew Mollo's and my *It Happened Here* (1964) died this December. Shaw, one of the few professionals to appear in our film, was better known for his stage roles, but his appearance in *The Spy in Black* (1939) and *Journey Together* (1945) gave his role in our wartime story additional authenticity. We could not afford him, but he agreed to work for Equity minimum – £10 per day – if allowed to rewrite his dialogue, and so long as he received his full fee if the film was ever sold. (Fortunately it was – to United Artists.)

Pauline Murray, who played the lead, had never acted before. She was Irish, and she was married to a doctor who practised at New Radnor, on the Welsh border. Dr Richard Jobson was a film collector – which was how I got to know him – and an amateur filmmaker of great talent. His *Driftwood*

and *Seashell* won *Amateur Cine World* magazine's Ten Best award for 1957.

Derek Hill, then working for ACW, had spotted Pauline Jobson when she accompanied Dick to London to receive his award. "She'd be perfect in your film," he told me. And when I met her, in New Radnor, I realised how right he was. But how could a busy doctor's wife down tools and devote herself to a long-term project like ours? (I was 19 and Andrew, my co-director, was 17.) To my surprise, Dick took up the matter on our behalf. Pauline, assuming it was the kind of amateur film she was used to, involving a weekend or two, said she would do it. She had no idea what lay in store – nor, come to that, did we. Those 'few weekends' stretched into seven years.

You cannot make a low-budget (i.e. no budget) film intermittently, as we tried to do. You lose the impetus. Every day is like the first day – and it's on the first day that you encounter all your problems. You get no consistency, no flow. People drop out and you have to go back and start their part all over again with someone else.

Pauline and Dick suggested we did as much as possible in their part of the country, so we moved the action from Wiltshire, where we had begun, to Radnorshire. Our ability to stage large-scale evacuation scenes was due to Dick contacting large numbers of patients and hinting that if they wanted further medical treatment, they'd better turn up. Several were former prisoners-of-war, Germans who had served in the *Luftwaffe*, the *Wehrmacht* and even the SS.

Eventually the time came when we had to move the film to London, and this coincided with Andrew getting a job as assistant director at Woodfall Films. Tony Richardson took an interest and asked to see some footage; he said if we could complete the film for £3,000 he would back us. Of course we said we could. But now that we were 'semi-professional' we could not just work on the occasional weekend, so Pauline had to abandon the practice for considerable periods.

She had brought such conviction to her role that we knew we could always depend on her. As a result, she spent her time serving as a foil for other players – many of whom were non-actors and couldn't act – and getting her own close-ups done very quickly very late at night. This saved us a fortune in film stock, and she supported us in hundreds of other ways, keeping up morale with her hilarious sense of humour and coping with other people's aches and pains. But it must have been very hard for her.

And yet she thought she was awful. When she saw the rushes of her first scenes, she wrote to me: "Sebastian and Fiona seemed alive, real people and I look like a vicious moron. If we hadn't got so far I'd say get someone else. I honestly feel the lack of expression on my face is disastrous and could ruin the whole thing for you."

She didn't realise that in her restraint lay the strength of her performance – and the strength of the film. I did my best to reassure her, but I don't think she understood until recently, just before her final illness, when the film was shown on BBC2 and the reactions began to come in. After 30 years, there was no longer any question of people simply being polite. Her performance had stood the test of time and her achievement was greatly admired. She was delighted to hear that. *Kevin Brownlow*

Picking a bone

When I was asked to write a piece for *Sight and Sound* about my obsession, the subject that immediately came to mind was myself. As I have recently acquired my own personal stalker, however, inspired – judging by the menacing, vaguely avant-garde and at times life-threatening messages left on my answering machine – by repeated viewing of Chris Sarandon's performance in *Lipstick*, I have been temporarily forced to rethink my position on the cult of the personality in the media, and its widespread dissemination (particularly as this dissemination applies to my personality). So here is an alternative obsession, no less intense, if somewhat less me.

I'm afraid I have to begin by picking a bit of a bone with GLAAD – you know, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, that dour, quasi-stalinist organisation which attempts to police gay imagery in Hollywood movies. I am sorry, but in my humble opinion Hollywood is doing and always has done a fine – dare I say wonderful? – and certainly astonishingly accurate job of representing the people of my church (in other words, fags). Outstanding work! Exemplary, keep it up! I suppose the most recent and obvious example of interference by these enemies of all is the pressure exerted on Jonathan Demme to make *Philadelphia* conform to their standards. In it a white, upper middle-class American family sits around and smiles – nay beams – as Tom Hanks, playing a gay man with Aids, all but breast-feeds their baby. I mean, which parallel universe is this scene intended to depict? Not even one scowling, vituperative uncle in the corner? Well, at least they got one part right, about fags loving opera.

Realistic cruising

Now I could go on at great length, and frequently do, about the enormous precision and style with which Hollywood has traditionally portrayed homosexuals. I could talk about the classic, droll gay character actors of the 30s and 40s, the Franklin Langborns, the Edward Everett Hortons, the Billy De Wolfes – whose eye-rolling concierges and mincing *maitre d's* provided the perfect backdrop for smart, sophisticated comedies. I could mention the loving re-creation of dark, dangerous gay bars – by teams of swinging art directors who plainly needed to do no research – in such 60s movies as *The Detective* (a Frank Sinatra vehicle) or *Bunny Lake is Missing* (okay, so it's not precisely a Hollywood movie, but it was directed by Otto Preminger – what more do you want?) And how much more unambiguous can you get than Sal Mineo in *Rebel Without a Cause*? Or, for that matter, than Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt in *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*, the movie which proves once and for all that having two gay leading characters may not be such a good idea. And what about pretty much the entire oeuvre of William Friedkin? Can you honestly dispute that *The Boys in the Band* and *Cruising* constitute the two poles of the most shattering realistic vision of gay life ever committed to celluloid? As far as lesbian role models go, I don't see how anyone could improve upon

Gay film-maker Bruce LaBruce loves 'Cruising', 'Rebel Without a Cause' and 'Dog Day Afternoon': in fact, Hollywood's portrayal of homosexuality generally. And he isn't joking

Elizabeth Ashley's ferociously glamorous turn as a dyke psycho-killer in *Windows*, the intense directorial debut of Gordon Willis, formerly cinematographer to Woody Allen and Francis Ford Coppola. And having spoken earlier, vis-a-vis my stalker, of Chris Sarandon in *Lipstick*, who could forget this same actor's heart-breaking, Oscar-nominated performance as Leon in *Dog Day Afternoon*, one of the great gay love stories of modern times?

In fact, the list of great gay characterisations in Hollywood movies is inexhaustible. Unfortunately I'm not, so rather than continue listing them, let me just say that I profoundly resent the pathetic attempts of such strident, humourless organisations as GLAAD to regulate and control gay representation. If Hollywood shows homosexuality as disturbing or dangerous or flamboyant or tragic or terribly, terribly affected and aesthetic (sounds pretty accurate to me so far), then it should be regarded as an indication of the presiding zeitgeist, and of how being gay is generally perceived by the culture at large. Hollywood films are not public service announcements, sweetie. As the man said, if you want to send a message, call Western Union. GLAAD and their ilk want to normalise and homogenise homos, to render us as bland and boring and inoffensive as everyone else. They want to take all the fun out of it. The alternative is dire. I've seen far more convincing and carefully-observed

depictions of fags in Hollywood flicks than in any earnest, cautious queer activist film, and you can quote me on that, wildly.

Lisping stereotypes

You may think I'm being sarcastic or something, but of course I'm not. I hate to break it to you, but homosexuality is not normal. That's what makes it so entertaining. And if you haven't figured out yet that being a fag is all about show business, you might as well let your membership card expire. Hollywood was built on the backs of fags (and fags on their backs) – from hairdressers and make-up artists to art directors and choreographers to actors and directors. It is still today more or less controlled by the gay mafia. So we must know what we're doing. Yes, there's nothing quite so entertaining as a fag in a Hollywood movie. Why, they can even save a picture, as *This Boy's Life* recently demonstrated. I'm even tempted to go see *A Low Down Dirty Shame* strictly for the enjoyment of the good old-fashioned lisping stereotypes so brazenly promised by the trailer. So GLAAD, protest all you like, change the way artists perceive reality, but you can keep Tom Hanks. Give me River Phoenix in *My Own Private Idaho* any day: a gay narcoleptic hustler hopelessly in love with a straight guy. How romantic. How accurate. How gay.

Bruce LaBruce's film *'Super 8½'* will be screened at the ICA later this year



How romantic: River Phoenix and Keanu Reeves in *'My Own Private Idaho'*



Indiscreet charmer?
Luis Buñuel

Surrealosauruses wrecks

Raymond Durnat

Buñuel

John Baxter, Fourth Estate, £18.99 (hbk), 352pp
ISBN 1-85702-1797

Buñuel's career is a biographer's nightmare, or delight. A scion of the landed gentry in backward Spain, he became many things: a man of letters, adrift in modernist Paris; the most brutal of film avant-gardists; the pioneer of an indigenous Spanish movie industry; a producer of remakes for Hollywood's (enormous) Spanish-speaking market; a government official in the Spanish Civil War; a functionary at the Museum of Modern Art's little film unit (until Hollywood's war on government funded film-making reduced him to prospective kitchen hand); a populist movie-maker for a Mexican Communist production company (where he advocated Hollywood B-feature film form); the auteur-star of the international art house cinema; and finally, a figure in the Oscar pantheon.

Behind the career, the spirit was just as complex, and key ingredients in it were quite unfamiliar to mainstream Western cultures: particularly his Spanish gentry religiosity, and a morality derived not from Puritanism but from a sense of honour, cruel in its integrity. Even his Communism was more 'anarcho' than Marxist, though his class background qualified him for the anarchists' death-lists ("Shot by the anarchists", in brackets after friends' names, becomes a running gag in his autobiography). His Surrealist 'freedom of the imagination' led him not to some wider humanism, as had attracted the majority of French Surrealists, such as Jacques Brunius (the man on the tumbrel in *L'Age d'Or*), but to a certain sadism. This was less the traditional S&M kind (though Baxter's informants allege a sort of *Viridiana* complex, involving foot fetishism and hypnotised women) than a philosophical nihilism.

This is a logically impregnable view, and humanly unbearable; for artists, a fertile contradiction. Buñuel joins an old, lapsed, pre-Enlightenment pessimism, which unites such diverse thinkers as Calvin, Hobbes, Swift and De Sade (and now perhaps Foucault, so weak and watery by comparison). It's thoroughly subversive of most affirmative ideologies, marxisms included, of course, and indeed of all language and discourse which, because structured by social and therefore moral functions, is structurally hypocritical – to paraphrase another Surrealist, Georges Bataille.

All of which put Buñuel beyond the pale, not only of theorists of ideology (Buñuel fitted none they knew) but of auteursists also (*Cahiers du Cinema* long belittled him). J. Francisco Aranda's *Critical Biography* back in 1968 approached Buñuel's cultural background in a rather text-bound way, whereas Baxter's focus is the man and his life. It's traditional biography in a sense, but revived by erudite journalism, which gets very different results from the old 'cultured gentleman' approach. When properly done, it's neither art gossip, irrelevant to the text at hand, nor hagiography, but oral history, with the expert testimony of perceptive collaborators

sharpening our sense of an individual mind as a genetic structure of the text. It fits in well with that academic growth-area, production studies, whose concentration on real, concrete, historical transactions is subverting so-called 'theory' as radically as microhistory has challenged world-historical abstractions. A recent spate of books has tended the same way: Buñuel's autobiography (ghosted, Baxter reveals, by Jean-Claude Carrière), the conversations with Max Aub, the interviews with Tomás Pérez Turrent and José de la Colina.

Baxter blends much material from such sources, unavailable in English, with new testimony and detail, opening fresh perspectives. The book is easy to read, lively, and indispensable to Buñuel studies. Though the broad outline is familiar from biographies like Aranda's, Baxter is nonetheless more detached and franker than Buñuel's admirers, who were often bound by old friendships, respect for strange genius or ideological loyalties. He brings out Buñuel's formidable power as a survivor, and his unusually efficient work procedures, as befitted an artist of not just "one cannon shot", but lifetime fertility. He applies to much of Buñuel's career a post-radical worldliness about career-networking (and sometimes, perhaps, dismisses modernist extremisms too quickly). He dishes excellent dirt on the Buñuel-Dali-Lorca friendship, with the homophobic Buñuel getting wildly jealous as Dali flirted with the infatuated Lorca, but recounts such mortal follies with modern bourgeois cool, free of the lip-licking of a Charles Higham (biographer of Errol Flynn and Danny Kaye) or the distaste that seethes throughout David Caute's book on Losey. Clearly, though, some English publisher should snap up Buñuel's widow's memoirs (entitled, suggestively, *Woman Without A Piano*).

Specialist readers will find quibbles galore, naturally: unspecified sources (making assessment of information difficult), assorted slips (William Empson wrote *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, not Edward Wilson), sloppy borrowings (the old canard about Cocteau plagiarising the cow in *L'Age d'Or*), regrettable omissions (Buñuel's autocriticism of his 'positive' Marxism in *Cela s'appelle l'Aurore*), hasty shrug-offs (dismissing Surrealism as mere rebellion). He seems to deprecate Buñuel's editing skills, yet I'd have thought *Un Chien Andalou* was an astonishing synthesis of montage and continuity editing, streets ahead of Eisenstein and state of the art even today. He may have misread Buñuel's failure to edit an anti-Nazi short out of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. As I heard it, the problem was that her film really was subversion-proof, being nothing but wall-to-wall Nazi pageantry, beheld with massive adoration. Still, his book nicely bypasses the besetting sin of writings on Buñuel, such as Paul Sandro's and, I suppose, mine: they lose sight of their quarry behind thickets of interpretation, Freudian, formal, or whatever. This primarily anecdotal book brings out the essential simplicity of Buñuel's creative method: get a sympathetic collaborator, and use the ideas you both like. Lesser artists would worry overmuch about consistency, but Buñuel understood that inconsistency, whether subtle or knock-down, is what thought is all about. Not till our mind has sensed a contradiction does consciousness begin.

Only the lonely

Kim Newman

Burton on Burton

Edited by Mark Salisbury, Faber & Faber, £14.99
ISBN 0-571-123-926

The format of Faber's *Someone on Someone* series has changed somewhat. Earlier examples tended to consist as much of excerpts from already-published interviews as original material, allowing for a shifting of perspective. Comments made during the chaos of shooting or post-production were juxtaposed with measured thoughts that come well after a given project is available on retail video at a knockdown price. Gradually the device has fallen out of fashion, in favour of texts that read like book-length interviews – which however they are not. The subliminal template is now perhaps Truffaut's *Hitchcock*, albeit with more self-effacing interrogators. A discreet editor/interviewer provides italicised running notes on dull biographical facts and prods the subject to expound at length, to consider his pre-film career life and influences (so far all Faber's subjects have been men), then to make remarks about everything he has ever been involved in, from million dollar studio projects to low-budget two-day TV commercial shoots.

Mark Salisbury's *Burton on Burton* is squarely in this more recent format, though very occasionally Burton lets slip a comment that reveals it to be the fruit not of a single session but of a series of interviews carried on over several years. The upbeat explication of *Batman* – made, evidently, when Burton was still under contractual obligation not to put self-analysis ahead of box-office-generating publicity – is amended and qualified by revisionary talk of the film's failings made while Burton was in the throes of *Batman Returns*, which he adjudges to be a more personal, better film even as he acknowledges "I don't think Warners were very happy with the movie." As the interview is compacted into a text that can be read at a single sitting, it sometimes seems as if Salisbury is nagging Burton into admitting things the director flirts with revealing but chooses always to hide. Given the obsessive return to lonely misfits in everything from his cartoon short *Vincent* to *Ed Wood* – Salisbury shrewdly notes that every single Burton-directed film has its lead character's name in the title – there's a self-defensive air about Burton's insistence that he really *did* have friends as a child, though he adds "I never really fell out with people, but I didn't really retain friends."

The solitary life of this animator and self-confessed mumbling inarticulate – these interview transcripts were probably heavily processed to make sense of the stumbling, unfinished sentences Johnny Depp says in his foreword are characteristic of Burton's speech – is hardly conducive to much examination. Yet of all the A-list top-grossing directors, Burton is the *only* one who works on personal projects. The miracle, perhaps, is that he can take a *Batman* comic or the life of a terrible film-maker and transform it into something resembling a self-portrait, always emphasising awkward, skewed, straggly, half-formed weirdness. Burton bluntly admits that his narrative sense is

"the worst thing you'll ever see," and that he gets impatient when he is accused of not making films about 'real' people, though it may be that these statements were made before *Ed Wood*, arguably his most emotionally involving, well-constructed and effectively paced film to date.

One story suggests a genuine strangeness rather than the arch construct of strangeness Burton has so carefully cultivated. By contrast with the way he deals with the death of a close friend and the dissolution of his marriage in a single sentence a couple of pages later, he rehashes at length an anecdote about Sean Young making a bid for the role of Catwoman by showing up at his office in costume, a well-known tale that has little apparent bearing on his work and properly belongs in the realms of gossip. Though he wasn't even on the lot the day she turned up, his account of the incident is coloured with a real sense that he has as a result been wronged. So is his description of some of the more barbaric work practices at Disney, where he worked and where "there's this thing you sign... which states that any thoughts you have during your employment are owned by the thought police." It is genuinely disturbing to think that this chronicler of the demented outsider, who can feel sympathy for Edward Scissorhands or Pee-wee Herman, is profoundly upset by an actress dressing up and making a fool of herself. It prompts the related thought that of all Burton's freaks, the only female to be more than a love interest – remember the way Pee-wee tries to ditch his girlfriend throughout the film – is Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman.

Because Burton began as an animator and an artist, this is a rare entry in the series, presenting its subject through visuals as well as words, with the inclusion of some of Burton's interesting character sketches for his films, sketches which demonstrate the consistency of his vision. That said, perhaps he isn't as persuasive in discussion as many directors of less substantial achievement might be, and often seems to skim through his own work, rejecting many of the often repeated insights for their obviousness but failing to replace them with any deeper thoughts. In fact, given Burton's occasional rambling, you get a far better sense of his personality and hang-ups by pondering his visualisations of the Penguin, Catwoman, Edward Scissorhands or Jack Skellington.

Coincident lives

Philip Strick

Jean Renoir: Letters

David Thompson and Lorraine LoBianco (eds), Faber & Faber, £25.00 (hb), 605pp ISBN 0-571-172-989

Responding from his Beverly Hills home in the 1960s to enquiries from journalists and fans, Jean Renoir would point out that, for him, screenplays were merely a point of departure. "It is from...my work with the actors and technicians that I finally come to grips with the real direction my theme should take," he says, adding in an afterthought elsewhere: "It is only while I was shooting (*La Grande Illusion*) that I discovered the real meaning of my subject." Illustrating the spontaneous creativity of Renoir on a grand scale, this bulky



Evading the thought police: Tim Burton chronicles the demented outsider

collection of his correspondence is similarly something of a springboard. It quickly demonstrates that he was not a communicator of polished phrases, profound ideas, or even of gossip and revelation. He responds rather than initiates, suggests rather than expects, sympathises rather than exhorts – but his letters are so copious, and maintain such firm links with family and friends, that the "real meaning" of Renoir can certainly be glimpsed within them.

Most of all, like his films, the letters reflect on lives coincident with his own. Centrally they tell the story of Dido Freire who, first meeting him through Cavalcanti (her uncle), was script-girl on *La Règle du jeu* in 1939 and hoarded the paperwork of Renoir's existence from then on. Whenever they were parted Renoir wrote devotedly to her, usually about the pain of separation; Dido kept everything. Frustratingly, his earlier partners were less scrupulous: Catherine Hessling, intent on stardom, features in the letters only as an interminable problem, while Marguerite Renoir (here as Houle, though other sources also list her as Mathieu) who was a vital member of his team, editing his output of 13 films between 1932 and 1939, gets but a single fleeting reference. As a result, the first 15 years of Renoir's film-making career go tantalisingly unremarked upon, apart from expressions of regret at his string of commercial failures and – most valuably – a list of sources for *La Grande Illusion*, which Renoir vigorously defends against accusations of plagiarism.

With Dido's arrival the picture changes for good, thanks to her excellent command of languages, and her affectionate acceptance by Renoir's growing circle of friends, with whom she often corresponds on his behalf. At the same time the escape to Hollywood (after a perilous delay in Vichy France) results in a torrent of new contacts and projects: Robert Flaherty, Albert Lewin, and Dudley Nichols steer Renoir into his first American film, *Swamp Water* (1941), from which he is soon struggling to extricate himself after clashes with the intransigent Darryl Zanuck, and there are letters to Charles Laughton, Fritz Lang, Charles Boyer, Erich von Stroheim, and other notable expatriates (although not to Marlene Dietrich, whom he dismisses in a rare moment of candour as "an extremely boring lady"). The loyalties established in the war years remain

firmly in place for the rest of the Renoirs' life; their exchanges of plans, hopes and regrets with Dudley Nichols, Clifford Odets, Georges Simenon, and Ingrid Bergman (whose problems with Rossellini are a particular cause for concern) provide a revealing commentary on strikingly parallel and interdependent careers.

Among the asides there are glimpses of the several lives of Renoir himself, often in unheralded and mysterious fragments. Apart from all the films which

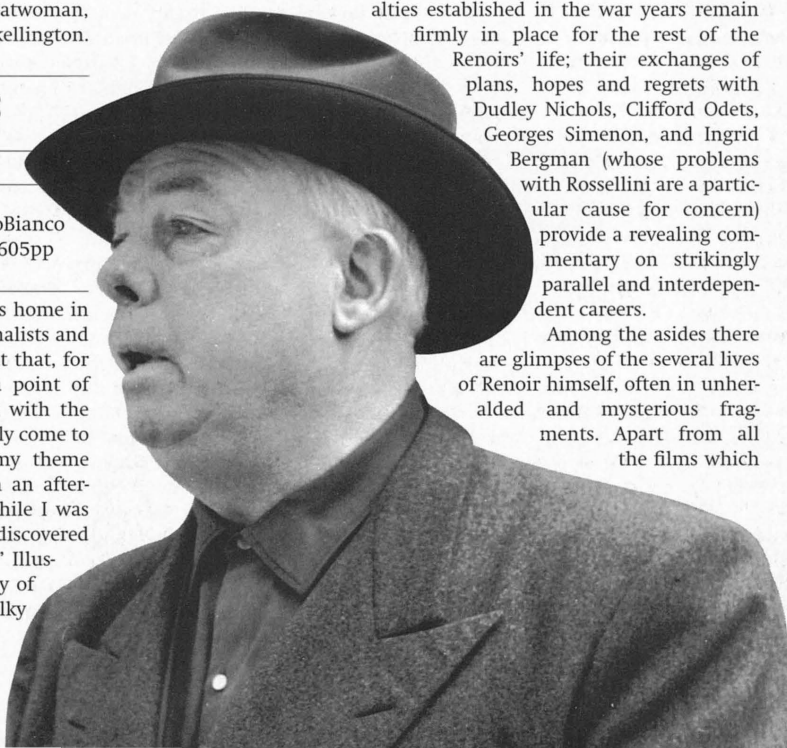
get made in apparent silence, Renoir being too busy to write to anyone while making them (with the particular result that the filming of *French Cancan* and of *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, two of his most joyful works, pass disappointingly without comment), the letters draw attention to the many projects Renoir wanted to film but never could.

This intriguing alternative filmography includes *Clash by Night*, *Black Narcissus* (we learn that Rumer Godden didn't care too much for the Powell-Pressburger version), *Aspects of Love*, *Van Gogh* (with Van Heflin), *Hunger* (with Oskar Werner), and a remake of *Les Bas-fonds* (with Warren Beatty). Approaching his seventies with too many such schemes collapsing around him, he jubilantly tells Ingrid Bergman "I think I was destined to be a writer," and settles down to produce four novels and a play, along with an autobiography – an essential companion volume, as it turns out, to his collected correspondence.

From the same period, long letters from François Truffaut record the rise and fall of the *nouvelle vague*, the events of 1968, and the involvement of Renoir, somewhat to his perplexity, as Honorary President of the beleaguered Cinémathèque. For a while Renoir calls him Truffault and Truffaut refers for years to the loyal Ginette Doynel, Renoir's agent in Paris, as Doinel, but familiarity makes the two directors the closest of friends and Renoir contributes an introduction (on the theme of 'masks' about which he has already written to Jeanne Moreau) to Bazin's 'Renoir' essays, assembled and revised by Truffaut as a double homage. To Janine Bazin, Renoir comments that Truffaut's presence "brightened my life", and he praises Truffaut's films – and even his appearance in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* – with an enthusiasm that would read suspiciously like mere tact were it not that the tone of a communication from the Renoirs (other than on business) is unstintingly warm and loving. Truffaut is the first to hear from them about Renoir's honorary Academy Award (immersed in *Adèle H.*, he replies with an exasperated description of Isabelle Adjani), and the final letter of the collection is "a note for no practical purpose" that once again cherishes their regard for each other.

Full of surprises, as when Renoir meets the Pope, likens Henry Miller to Diderot, or invites Picasso to design a ballet sequence, the letters may ultimately be no substitute for identifying a film-maker from his films, but like the revelation that Gabin wears Renoir's own army uniform in *La Grande Illusion*, they offer a wealth of clues and insights amid the colourful context of his private struggles. Earnestly annotated by compilers Lorraine LoBianco and David Thompson, supported by four translators, the book could use some more photos and some more proof-reading: for 'Demoy' read 'Demy', for example, and for 'Schufftan' read 'Schufftan'. Incorrect dates are given for *L'Été meurtrier* and *Miracle in Milan*, and the innumerable biographies are peculiarly selective: Jean Remy's work in Truffaut's films is unmentioned, the David Goodis influence on French cinema is ignored, and so on. The result is nevertheless unfailingly attractive for Renoir fans even if it is something of a luxury item for those who have yet to discover *Boudu sauvé des eaux* or *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*.

Epistolary pursuits: Jean Renoir



REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films plus National Film Theatre previews

Andre

USA 1994

Director: George Miller

Certificate

U
Distributor
 Rank
Production Company
 Kushner-Locke productions
Executive Producers
 Peter Locke
 Donald Kushner
Co-executive Producer
 Lawrence Mortorff
Producers
 Annette Handley
 Adam Shapiro
Co-producers
 Sue Baden-Powell
 Dana Baratta
Production Associates
 Mississippi: Kate Axelrod
 Boston: Mark Hankey
 Tasmania: Anni Doyle
Production Supervisor
 Reid Shane
Production Co-ordinators
 Yvonne Melville
 Mississippi: Morgan Clevenger
Unit Production Managers
 Sue Baden-Powell
 Brent O'Connor
Location Managers
 Timothy Haughian
 Boston: Eric Korsh
Post-production Supervisors
 Vanessa Hayes
 Michael Tingel
Post-production Co-ordinator
 Gene Kozick
2nd Unit Director
 Ernie Orsatti
Assistant Directors
 Brian Giddens
 Sandra Mayo
 Bonnie R. Benwick
Casting
 Annette Benson
 Lindsay Walker
Screenplay
 Dana Baratta
 Based on the book *A Seal Called Andre* by Harry Goodridge, Lew Dietz
Script Supervisors
 Jessica Clothier
 Mississippi: Jackie Gondrella
Director of Photography
 Thomas Burstyn
Underwater Camera Operators
 Pauline Heaton
 Brenda Haggerty
 Peter Brown
 John McKinney
 Chip Matheson
Camera Operators
 Paul Birkett
 Boston: Jon Beckemeier
 Tasmania: Chris Morgan
Editors
 Harry Hitner
 Patrick Kennedy
Production Designer
 William Elliott
Art Directors
 Sheila Haley
 Mississippi: Nick Rippon
Set Decorator
 Barry Kemp
Set Dressers
 Il Chuck Robinson
 Gordon A. Clapp
Special Effects Co-ordinator
 Bill Orr
Special Effects
 Jak Osmond
 Perry Beckam

Animatronic Seals

Image Animation
Costume Design
 Maya Mani
Costume Supervisors
 Donna Cristiano
 Mississippi: Donna Sphan
Make-up Artists
 Jacky Wilkinson
 Beverly Benjamin
 Mississippi: Donna Sphan
Hairstylists
 Sherry Anne Ross
 Dean Scheck
Titles
 Cinema Research Co.
Music/Music Conductor
 Bruce Rowland
Music Supervisor
 Spencer Proffer
Music Co-supervisor
 Harold Bronson
Music Editors
 Stan Jones
 Carl Zittner
 Mark Heyes
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Thanks To You" by Julie Gold, performed by Tyler Collins; "This Magic Moment" by Doc Pomus, Mort Shuman, performed by (1) Morgan Heritage, (2) The Drifters; "Yakety Yak", "Along Came Jones" by Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller, performed by The Coasters; "Rama Lama Ding Dong" by George Jones Jnr, performed by The Edsels; "I Only Have Eyes For You" by Harry Warren, Al Dubin, performed by The Flamingos; "You Talk Too Much" by Joe Jones, Reginald Hall, performed by Joe Jones; "Peppermint Twist" by Joey Dee, Henry Glover, performed by Joey Dee and The Starlighters; "The Starlighters' Concerto" by Sandy Linzer, Derury Randel, performed by The Toys; "Don't Say Nothin' Bad (About My Baby)" by Gerry Goffin, Carole King, performed by The Cookies; "Johnny Angel" by Lyn Duddy, Lee Pockriss, performed by Shelley Fabares; "Green Onions" by Al Jackson Jnr, Booker T. Jones, Lewis Steinberg, Steve Cropper, performed by Booker T. & The MG's; "You're My Best Friend" by Craig Taubman, performed by Craig n Co; "Washington Post March" by John Philip Sousa
Supervising Sound Editor
 G. Michael Graham
Sound Editors
 Bill Bell
 Robert Costanza
 Michael Dickeson
 Mark Friedgen
 Rick Steele
 Mark Steele
 David Eichhorn
 Gary Macheel
 Dialogue: Michael Dandy
 Darren King
 Michael Werth
Supervising ADR Editor
 Kristi Johns

Sound Mixers

Michael McGee
 Music: Robin Grey
Foley Recordist
 Steve Copley
Re-recording Mixers
 David Appleby
 Scott Purdy
 Tim O'Connell
Additional Seal Sounds
 Frank Welker
Foley Artist
 John 'Woody' Sievert
ADR Group Co-ordinator
 Leigh French
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Danny Virtue
Sea Lion Trainers
 Brian McMillan's Animal Rentals
 Unlimited
 Head Trainer: Suzanne M. Fortier
 Trainers: Scott Collins
 Angie Snowie
 Lesley Hurren
Animal Co-ordinators
 Brian McMillan
 Canada: Mark Wiener

Cast

Tina Majorino
 Toni Whitney
Chelsea Field
 Thalice Whitney
Shane Meier
 Steve Whitney
Aidan Pendleton
 Paula Whitney
Shirley Broderick
 Mrs McCann

Keith Carradine

Harry Whitney
Andrea Libman
 Mary May
Keith Szarabajka
 Billy Baker
Joshua Jackson
 Mark Baker
Jay Brazeau
 Griff Armstrong
Bill Dow
 Ellwyn
Joy Coghill
 Betsy
Stephen Dimopoulos
 Dan Snow
Frank C. Turner
 John Miller
Kristian Ayre
 Gerald
Gregory Smith
 Bobby
Ric Reid
 Henry White
Duncan Fraser
 Jack Adams
Gary Jones
 Lance Tindall
Teryl Rothery
 Jennifer File
Douglas Newell
 Lou
Annette O'Toole
 Toni's Adult Voice
Andre
 Tory

8,499 feet
 95 minutes

Dolby stereo
 In colour
 Eastman
 Anamorphic

Rockport Maine 1962. Seven-year-old Toni Whitney lives with her parents, her teenage sister and brother, and an assortment of stray animals in an old weatherboard house overlooking the sea. Toni is a loner, the butt of practical jokes at school. Her father Harry is harbour master of the small fishing town but he devotes more attention to his menagerie. Local fishermen (especially Billy Baker) attribute their poor catches to his negligence.

Harry finds an orphaned seal pup and, with Toni's assistance, nurses it back to health. As he grows up, the seal, named Andre, shares boisterously in Toni's activities, boosting her popularity at school. Harry encourages Andre to swim but the sight of a dead seal floating out at sea dissuades him from returning the pup to the wild. Blaming seals for the damage to his nets, a drunken Billy attacks Andre. By intervening, Harry misses the Liberty Pageant in which his older daughter, Paula, has a starring role. Thus she too begins to resent Andre.

As winter sets in, it is time for Andre to migrate south, but Harry fears the seal will not be able to fend for himself and so builds him an indoor bath. Andre pines in confinement, escaping only to return, a little the worse for wear, in the spring. His fame spreads and tourists flock to Rockport. Paula and Mark, Billy's son, decide to get rid of him. They take him out to sea but Paula prevents Mark from shooting him. Toni sees them and gives chase in her dinghy. As a ferocious storm brews, Harry and Billy put aside their differences and set off to rescue Toni. She is about to founder on rocks when Andre tows her to safety.

Andre is then taken away by the Marine Mammal Protection Agency

while Toni is consoled by his new keeper. Harry lands a job with the agency and Billy takes his place as harbour master. In spring, Toni travels to Boston to release Andre into the sea. As reports of sightings come in, the inhabitants of Rockport gather to welcome Andre after an astounding 250-mile journey home. A pattern is established whereby Andre winters in the aquarium and swims back to his adoptive family for the summer.

A canny blend of ingredients ensures that this animal feature should appeal to a broad audience. For small children there's the spectacle of wild animals made accessible, and enough anthropomorphism for gags (Andre posing in Aloha shirt and sunglasses, Andre interacting with Lassie on the television screen). Sentimentality is kept at bay by Andre's blowing raspberries. For older kids there's the hint of a teen romance between Toni's sister Paula and Billy Baker's son Mark. In Billy Baker the story has a boorish, bearded villain who can be requisitioned for male bonding. Finally, for the benefit of adults, the film supplies a healthy dollop of early 60s retro by including some of the more exuberant golden oldies of the era.

Predictably enough for a film of this nature, the human family looms large and comes clean cut. Toni, who narrates the story, wields an uncomplicated androgynous charm that is hard to resist. It is perhaps significant that when we first see her she is attempting to perform a marriage ceremony for two fully costumed pigeons, confusing male with female. As far as gender specifics and adolescent traumas are concerned, it is the teenagers who must redress the balance. Thalice, the highly attractive mother, comes across as a domestic paragon who finds time for knocking out her own work on a typewriter. As a superior being, she's probably just too busy to intervene. Harry, the father, is implicitly caring but flawed; too preoccupied with his animal charges to take heed of what's going on. Billy Baker is the perfect foil, a snarling single parent with the spectres of divorce, drink and domestic violence hanging round him, yet somehow in tune. It is he who castigates Harry for his ideal family and home, thus building self-criticism like a safety valve into the body of the film.

Andre is based on a true story. Given that it strives successfully to please, it seems ironic that matters of authenticity have run the production into controversy. Apparently Andre is not played by a seal but by a sea-lion – a Californian one at that. Nevertheless there is little disharmony in the fictional balance between nature and civilization. On the one hand, there is the mysterious world of seals; on the other, the ties that bind Andre to the Whitney family and Rockport – a latter-day Garden of Eden set apart in time and location from the ravages of commercialism. This is a film which does not baulk at hedging its bets.

Jo Comino

Camilla

Canada/United Kingdom 1993

Director: Deepa Mehta

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Entertainment

Production Companies
Shaftesbury Films
(Canada)/Skreba Creon
(UK)

With financial assistance from Telefilm Canada Ontario Film Development Corporation Foundation Fund to Underwrite New Drama for Pay Television British Screen

Executive Producer
Jonathan Barker

Producers
Christina Jennings
Simon Relp

Associate Producer
Suzanne Colvin

Production Co-ordinator
Nan Skiba

Production Manager
Susan Murdoch

Location Managers
Joe Barzo
US:
Mike Riley

Post-production Co-ordinator
John Nabereznyj

Assistant Directors
Gareth Tandy
Ken Smith
Kathy Duncan
Megan Banning

Casting
Deirdre Bowen

Screenplay
Paul Quarrington

Story
Ali Jennings

Script Supervisor
Marie La Haye

Story Editor
Carol Hay

Director of Photography
Guy Dufaux

Editor
Barry Farrell

Production Designer
Sandra Kybartas

Art Director
Armando Sgrignuoli

Set Decorator
Carol Lavoie

Set Dresser
Dan Wladyka

Scenic Artists
Matthew Lammerich
Harry Pavelson

Special Effects Co-ordinators
David Lemmen
US:
Bob Shelley Special Effects

Costume Design
Milena Canonero
Elisabetta Beraldo

Make-up
Patricia Green
Lizbeth Williamson

Hairstylist
Mary-Lou Green

Titles/Opticals
Film Effects

Music
John Altman
Daniel Lanois

Music Director
Jocelyne Lanois

Music Conductor / Music Arrangements / Orchestrations
John Altman

Music Editor
Bruce Fowler

Music Co-ordinator
The Jeff Wayne Music Group

Songs/Music Extracts
"Parachute" by Ali Jennings, performed by Ali Jennings, Malcolm Burn, Daniel Lanois; "Messenger", "Bird in My Heart" by Daniel Lanois, performed by Ali Jennings, Daniel Lanois; "Parlour Song" by Daniel Lanois, performed by David Torkanowsky, Freddy Koella; "Violin Concerto" by Johann Brahms, performed by The Münchner Symphoniker

Sound Design / Supervising Sound Editor
Bruce Nyznik

Sound Editor
Steve Gorman

Sound Mixer
Glen Gauthier

Foley Artist
Andy Malcolm

Cast
Jessica Tandy
Camilla Cara
Bridget Fonda
Freda Lopez
Elias Koteas
Vincent Lopez
Maury Chaykin
Harold Cara
Graham Greene
Hunt Weller
Hume Cronyn
Ewald
Ranjit Chowdhry
Kapur
George Harris
Jerry
Sandi Ross
Border Guard
Gerry Quigley
Border Official
Atom Egoyan
Director
Devyani Saltzman
Camille Spence
Girls
Martha Cronyn
Coat Check Woman
Sheilanne Lindsay
Lauren Tinscheff
Don McKellar
Security Guard

8,528 feet
95 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Anamorphic

Freda and Vince Lopez are a handsome Canadian couple, not all that happily married. He was once an artist, but gave up painting for the easier financial rewards of advertising; she has remained true to her ideals of becoming a musician and a songwriter, but lacks the self-confidence to realise these ambitions. They head down to the coast of the Deep South for a holiday. Once there, relations between



All fingers and thumbs: Jessica Tandy, Bridget Fonda

Harold, the hard-headed producer of pornographic films who owns their holiday cottage, and his sprightly ex-concert violinist mother Camilla, who believes he owes her money, turn out to be similarly fraught, and the destinies of the two households become entangled. Harold offers Vince a job - which he jumps at - promoting soft porn films. Camilla's tales of artistic derring-do entrance Freda, whose attempts to win over local bar audiences are unsuccessful. She refuses to go back with Vince and Harold and, finding out that the Winter Gardens theatre in Toronto was the scene of one of Camilla's greatest triumphs, she persuades the older woman to come north to hear a favourite Brahms concerto.

They set off without telling the men where they're headed. While crossing a Georgia river, Freda's car rolls off the ferry. While Harold and Vince are struggling to track them down, the two women stop over in a deserted hotel on an idyllic holiday island. They play music together to an admiring audience of hotel staff and then hitch a ride with Hunt Weller. He claims to be a famous record producer but turns out to be a conman, and robs them. Camilla leaves a message with Harold pretending they have been kidnapped, ordering him to comply with certain instructions. On the way there, Camilla forces Freda to divert to Niagara Falls, where she is reunited with Ewald, the violin maker who was her long lost love. Despite knowing that Camilla's past was not as glorious as she had maintained, Freda is inspired by her example to make a success of her marriage and her career.

"Miss Fonda's guitar coach" - if ever there was a credit to strike a chill into film going hearts, it is that one. How many more sensitive and gifted individuals whose talents a cruel cold world refuses to recognise will Fonda have to play before we out there in the cold, cruel world get the message? Think of a number and treble it.

On the other hand, the considerable presence of Elias Koteas in the male lead (and fellow Atom Egoyan regular

Maury Chaykin as Harry, and indeed Egoyan himself, fleetingly typecast as a director of salacious movies) leads one to expect this film to be more complex and sophisticated than it is, but then Koteas' presence raised the same hope for *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. In the end, the very simplicity of this almost disconcertingly straightforward work turns out to be its strength.

The sure knowledge that Fonda's terminally drippy singer-songwriter is going to be taught a valuable lesson in life by Jessica Tandy's game old violinist, and that Fonda's husband is going to learn a new respect for her as an artist and a woman, does not detract from the pleasure of the story's unfolding. In its early stages, this screenplay is so absurdly biased against its male characters and in favour of Freda's dewy-eyed fantasies of creativity ("Remember how you used to paint me naked, playing the guitar, writing a song about you painting me?") that much fun is to be had from siding with the former. Go on Elias, take the silver coins from Harold the sleazy pornographer, that's the way for you to really find yourself.

It is much to the film-makers' credit that audience sympathies are a great deal better balanced by the close. True, shiftily Vince solidifies into a pillar of strength, and cheap sweaty Harold acquires unexpected emotional depths, but Freda and Camilla's relationship becomes less rather than more nauseating the longer it progresses. Tandy's performance is as bright-eyed and bushy tailed as could be wished. She starts out with the feistiness dial turned up well beyond eleven, but employs great subtlety in developing a sense of her character's vulnerability.

This lightness of touch is complemented by some sensitive direction from Deepa Mehta, who manages to convey a great sense of momentum without lapsing into road movie shorthand. The scene where a roomful of smiling black Southerners marvel at Camilla's and Freda's instinctive command of the boogie though is still a bit much.

Ben Thompson

Disclosure

USA 1994

Director: Barry Levinson

Certificate
18

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Company
Warner Bros presents
A Baltimore Pictures/Constant c production

Executive Producer
Peter Giuliano

Producers
Barry Levinson
Michael Crichton

Co-producer
Andrew Wald

Associate Producers
Patricia Churchill
James Flamberg

Unit Production Manager
Patricia Churchill

Location Manager
John Panzarella

Post-production Supervisor
Blair Daily

Assistant Directors
Kate Davey
Sheryl Blanc
Julie Herrin

Casting
Ellen Chenoweth

Associates:
Marie Rowe
Debra Zane

Screenplay
Paul Attanasio

Based on the novel by Michael Crichton

Script Supervisor
Julie Pitkanen

Director of Photography
Anthony Pierce-Roberts

Camera Operators
Michael St. Hilaire
Tony Gaudioz

Steadicam Operator
Bob Gorelick

Special Visual Effects
Industrial Light & Magic

Supervisor:
Eric Brevig

Producer:
Kim Bromley

Art Director:
TyRuben Ellingson

Associate Art Director:
George Hull

Computer Graphics Supervisor:
Ellen Poon

Editor:
Bill Kimberlin

Computer Graphic Artists:
Euan K. MacDonald
Robert Marinic
David Meny
Linda Siegel
Laurence Treweek
Robert Weaver

CG Modeler:
Geoff Campbell

CG Animators:
Rob Coleman
Peter Daulton

Digital Paint Artist:
Scott Frankel

Digital Compositors:
Greg Maloney
Tom Rosseter

Computer Graphics Supervisor
Steve Anker

Editor
Stu Linder

Associate Editor
Blair Daily

Production Designer
Neil Spisak

Art Directors
Richard Yanez-Toyon
Charles William Breen

Set Decorator
Garrett Lewis

Illustrator
Christopher Ross

Special Effects Supervisor
Steve Galich

Costume Design
Gloria Gresham

Costume Supervisors
Linda Matthews
Charles Velasco

Make-up
Cheri Minns
Tom Lucas
Ronnie Specter

Hairstylists
Stephen F. Robinette
Lynda Gurasich
Alan D'Angerio

Title Design
Nina Saxon Film Design

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Music
Ennio Morricone

Music Performed by
Unione Musicisti di Roma

Music Conductor / Orchestrations
Ennio Morricone

Music Editor
James Flamberg

Supervising Sound Editors
Marc Fishman
Harry Cohen

Dialogue:
Cathie Speakman

Dialogue Editors
Alain Schultz
Bill Dotson

ADR Supervisor
Michelle Perrone

ADR Editor
Robert Guastini

Production Sound Mixer
Steve Cantamessa

Foley Editor
Jeff Vaughn

Foley Mixer
Eric Thompson

Sound Re-recording Mixers
Ken Teaney
Bill Fresh
Randy Thom
Lora Hirschberg

Sound Effects Editors
Ann Scibelli
Tim Gedemer
David Farmer
Ricardo Broadus
Paul Menichini

Foley Artists
Gregg Barbanell
Vince Nicastro

Cast
Michael Douglas
Tom Sanders
Demi Moore
Meredith Johnson
Donald Sutherland
Bob Garvin
Caroline Goodall
Susan Hendler
Roma Maffia
Catherine Alvarez
Dylan Baker
Philip Blackburn
Rosemary Forsyth
Stephanie Kaplan
Dennis Miller
Marc Lewyn
Suzie Plakson
Mary Anne Hunter
Nicholas Sadler
Don Cherry
Jacqueline Kim
Cindy Chang
Joe Urla
John Conley Jr
Michael Chieffo
Stephen Chase
Joe Attanasio
Furillo
Faryn Einhorn
Eliza Sanders
Trevor Einhorn
Matt Sanders
Allan Rich
Ben Heller

Kate Williamson
Barbara Murphy
Michael Laskin
Arthur Kahn
Donal Logue
Chance Geer
Jack Shearer
Fred Price
Farrah Fokke
Adele Lewyn
Kim Tran
Chau-Minh
Pat Asanti
John Levin
Marie Rowe
Mrs Ross
Edward Power
John Conley Snr
David Drew Gallagher
Spencer Kaplan
Melanie Henderson
Garvin's Secretary
Anne Flanagan
Anneliza Scott
Secretaries
Rohana Razali
Malaysian Newscaster

Wayne Duval
Executive
Iph Tabakin
Elevator Attendant
Lynn Tufeld
Lewyn's Assistant
Bernard Hocke
Security Guard
Nancy Yee
Cleaning Woman
Jesse Dizon
Mohammed Jafar
Darina Chylik
Maid
Lynne Killmeyer
Business Woman
Stephen Hauser
Microphone Tester
Linda McCullough
Computer

11,533 feet
128 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Anamorphic

Tom Sanders works in Seattle as a division manager for computer corporation Digital Communications, which is due to be merged with Conley-White. Tom is assuming he will be promoted to vice-president of the division once the negotiations are completed. An e-mail note from Arthur Kahn, overseeing the new line of hardware in Malaysia, informs Tom of a problem with a crucial chip. Having learned from DigiCom's counsel Philip Blackburn that he has been passed over for promotion, Tom visits company head Bob Garvin and finds him with Meredith Johnson, Tom's ex-lover of 10 years before, who is to be the new VP. Meeting up with his creative team: Stephanie Kaplan, Don Cherry and Mark Lewyn, Tom promises to call Lewyn when he knows more about the faulty chip. Garvin announces Meredith's promotion and she asks Tom to meet her later in her office. He receives an anonymous e-mail message implying that he desires Meredith.

At the meeting, Meredith attempts to seduce him with expensive wine and sexual demands. While she is distracted by a call from Garvin, Tom tries to call Lewyn, getting an answer machine at the very moment Meredith returns to get intimate. Tom protests, but Meredith begins fellating him. He succumbs angrily to foreplay, all the while saying "no", then extricates himself and returns home feeling humiliated. Susan, his wife, tells him that Meredith called to inform him that an 8:00 am meeting has been put back to 8:30. When he arrives the next morning he finds that in fact it started at 7:30. Meredith berates him, and Lewyn claims he did not ring that night before. Cherry demonstrates the new virtual reality hardware to the Conley-White executives.

Tom goes to explain his difficulties with Meredith, only to find himself accused of sexually harassing her. Another e-mail message arrives from 'A Friend'. Tom hires Catherine Alvarez, a brilliant lawyer, and files his own sexual harassment suit against Meredith. At a secret arbitration hearing Catherine's cross-examination reveals that Meredith had premeditated the seduction. Tom realises that he didn't ring

Lewyn, but another associate named Levin, and is acquitted when the harassment conversation is played back from Levin's answer machine. Later Tom overhears Meredith plotting to make him the fall guy over the faulty chip. He hacks into the virtual reality network to find the files which will exonerate him, just as Meredith is wiping them. Tom manages to get the hard copy files from Mohammed, a colleague in Malaysia. At an important presentation, Tom reveals that Meredith ordered the cost-cutting changes which resulted in the faulty chip, and she is dismissed. The merger is completed. Kaplan is appointed VP and is revealed as the 'Friend'.

● Packaged as the "thriller that opened the new chapter in the sex wars" Michael Crichton's novel *Disclosure* is an engagingly provocative essay about corporate power as manifested through sexual politics. If you invert Tom's discovery that "sexual harassment is all about power", then power is all about who fucks over whom. Thus in this instance, the real victims might be the workers who provide the cheap labour in Malaysia that make DigiCom's expansion possible.

However it is sexual politics which made the book a *cause célèbre*. Crichton acknowledges in the afterword that the majority of harassment claims are brought by women against men. Nevertheless, he claims that the "advantage of a role reversal story is that it may enable us to examine aspects concealed by the traditional responses and conventional rhetoric." The film tries hard then to appear analytical about sex and power, but - like DigiCom's stunning glass office building, which enables everyone to see each other without knowing what's going on - there is a sense here of show but don't tell.

The glass ceiling is also very much in evidence. Garvin announces that he is proud to appoint Meredith as VP to show that such an obstruction can be shattered for women, but it is he who

holds the hammer. Donald Sutherland plays Garvin as part-schemer and part-paternalist, but there's also something of the pod-person about him. The real power belongs to the anonymous men on the Conley-White team. Joining them on the top floor, Meredith (even her name is masculinised) is the phallic woman supreme. When first we see her in Garvin's office, it is her glistening legs alone that are in the frame, high-heeled shoes reflecting a thin dagger of light - a perfect if rather too obvious case study in fetishism. Slickly dressed and gravelly voiced, Demi Moore plays her as though she had a sneak preview of Linda Fiorentino in *The Last Seduction*, but turning down the voltage, as if knowing that she hasn't the conviction to get away with such bad behaviour. There is a certain irony as Meredith tells Sanders in the finale, "I'm only playing the game the way you guys set it up," only to be met by the smug riposte, "did it ever occur to you that I set you up?" For Meredith is a fantasy spiderwoman, product of the patriarchal power system, dreamt up and subsequently destroyed by men because they find her just too scary.

As the put-upon Sanders, Michael Douglas makes a predictable foil. Although hardly as slick a creation as his Gordon Gekko who pronounced that "lunch is for wimps", Douglas still borrows from such previous *zeitgeist* testing roles in *Wall Street* and *Fatal Attraction*. In the opening shot, the endangered homely domain is aglow, voices off-screen are busy with domestic rituals while a computer blinks with the morning's e-mail. You almost expect that pet bunny to leap into frame. As the plot congeals, Douglas begins to rehearse his familiar mutton-to-the-slaughter look. In this respect, *Disclosure* seems a very calculated attempt to tap the *zeitgeist*. However such moments cannot be manufactured so self-consciously. Thus *Disclosure* never succeeds in being more than an average conspiracy thriller.

Lizzie Francke



Relax, don't do it: Demi Moore, Michael Douglas

Dong-Chun de Rizi (The Days)

China 1993

Director: Wang Xiaoshuai

Certificate
Not Yet Issued
Distributor
ICA
Production Company
Yinxiang Dianying
Gongzuoshi
Executive Producers
Wang Xiaoshuai
Zhang Hongtao
Producers
Liu Jie
Zhang Hongtao
Wang Yao
Assistant Directors
Wu Tao
Ge Fei
Screenplay
Wang Xiaoshuai
Directors of Photography
Wu Di
Liu Jie
Special:
Yang Shu
Editor
Jin Jin (Wang Xiaoshuai)
Art Director
Liu Xiaodong
Music
Liang Heping
Music Performed By:
Liang Heping
Zhang Weiming

Sound
Yu Yuezhang
Meng Jianwei
Post-production Sound
Wang Jinshen
Wang He

Cast
Yu Hong
Chun
Liu Xiaodong
Dong
Lou Ye
Friend in Bar
Wang Xiaoshuai
Narrator
Chen Jie
Liu Zhongshan
Liu Xiaochun
Yang Jincheng
Liu Baogin
Zhang Yanchun
Liu Suxian

6,750 feet
75 minutes

Black and white
Mandarin dialogue
English subtitles

● Dong and Chun are tutors in the Beijing art school from which they both graduated; they met and fell in love as students and have lived together ever since. But their relationship has grown stale and their day to day lives, from the early morning love-making to her housework and his late night drinking, have become routine. Both are aware that their time together is coming to an end, but both are very careful not to raise the issue.

Dong is crushed when a buyer from Hong Kong reneges on a commitment to buy his paintings. Chun, more realistic and more cynical, tells him to stop dreaming, but indulges him when he tries to drown his sorrows. One night he overhears her placing a collect call to someone in New York. Dong withdraws into himself and is unresponsive when Chun mentions the idea of emigrating. He begins a life-size portrait of her, representing her on a long-ago summer excursion to the Great Wall. A letter from abroad arrives for Chun. Dong discusses mutual acquaintances with a friend who is himself planning to emigrate.

Chun tells Dong that she is pregnant and he urges her to get an abortion. When it's done, she suggests a trip together to visit his family in North-East China. The break from routine slightly quickens their pulses, but Dong's need to show Chun off to his parents (and to prove himself dominant in the relationship) makes for awkwardness and embarrassment. Dong shows Chun sites from his childhood. Chun tells him that she wants to

see her own family (with whom she severed contact during the Cultural Revolution) before going abroad, and intends to leave the next day. Dong becomes angry and resentful. But Chun leaves as planned.

Back in the Beijing apartment, Dong receives many excited letters from Chun but can never formulate a reply. He locks himself away and never sees anyone, slowly losing touch with reality. After breaking all the glasses in the art school one night, he is sent for psychiatric tests. His friend, narrating the story on the soundtrack, reports the doctor's comments: five out of ten people are like Dong, and his case presents no cause for concern.

There has never been a Chinese film like *The Days* before, but it has much in common with other 'outlaw' movies and videotapes made in Beijing in the last two years. The emergence of an independent film and video culture in China reflects the country's new social and economic realities: the refusal of the impoverished state film studios to employ new directors, the sudden proliferation of relatively wealthy entrepreneurs in the cities, and the rise of a post-Cultural Revolution generation with attitudes, ideas and interests very different from their fifth generation predecessors. Like He Yi's *Red Beads* (*Xuan Lian*) and Zhang Yuan's *Beijing Bastards* (*Beijing Zazhong*), *The Days* was made on a shoestring – around £7,000, raised from private investors – and produced entirely outside the system, without permission or approval from the authorities. All of these films remain unseen in China, but their 'illegal' international distribution has led the Film Bureau to blacklist their directors, in a conspicuously unsuccessful attempt to stop them from making more independent films.

Wang Xiaoshuai's film goes to the heart of experiences and states of mind shared by many people of his age and background. Dong and Chun (played by a real life couple, who are also real life stars of the Beijing art world) are typical Beijing artist/intellectuals of the 90s; pathetically dependent on a system from which they feel completely alienated, struggling to find ways to supplement a meagre state salary, repressed and careful not to show their feelings. The art college that is their 'work unit' evidently has no actual work for them (not an unusual situation in China, where overstaffing remains the norm in the public sector); the only advantage they have over their self-employed contemporaries is the dingy, cold-water apartment that comes with the non-jobs. Like all such people in present day China, they understand that they are on their own economically but still subject to all the old political controls. For Dong, like many, the only real challenge is survival, at whatever cost to his self-esteem and mental health. For Chun, like many others, the only way up is out: she cannot envisage things getting any better if she stays in China. Their predicaments, in short, are legion.



Spring's awakening: Yu Hong

At first sight, Wang's approach to the final days of their relationship is scrupulously naturalistic. Most scenes limit themselves to quotidian routines; there is no attempt to inject phoney 'drama' into the situation. But many of the compositions and visual/aural details have resonances that can only be described as poetic: the squads of students in military training who jog past the apartment block when Dong comes down in the mornings to fetch hot water, for example, or the gatehouse keeper who teases Dong with fantasies of receiving letters from abroad before telling him that no mail has come for him. None of these details (and there are countless other examples) has a metaphorical thrust, but their allusions to things strange and sinister coalesce a mood of unreality which gently undermines the surface naturalism.

Wang finesses this process by himself speaking a novelistic narration, ostensibly from the point of view of an unidentified friend of the couple (is he the guy who drinks with Dong in a bar one night?) but in fact offering psychological insights beyond the reach of any friend. The narration provides relevant background information about the couple (their relations with their respective families, recollections of the day trip that inspired Dong's portrait of Chun), but the wry, semi-detached tone of its analyses of their problems achieves a deeper level of truth.

There is a simple pun in the film's Chinese title. *Dong-Chun de Rizi* means literally Winter and Spring Days, but of course Dong (Winter) and Chun (Spring) are also the names of the protagonists. The story does indeed begin in winter and end in spring, setting the couple's final separation in the snows of the former Manchuria and Dong's

relapse into mild schizophrenia in a room lit by spring sunlight. By this time, Chun herself is absent, or rather present only in Dong's unfinished painting, in which she stands on the Great Wall in a floral jacket peering through binoculars at what might be Russia in the distance. Here, finally, is a suggestion of metaphor: 'spring', the film implies, remains elusive for China's artists.

If this is a metaphor, it's nothing like the ones found in movies such as *Yellow Earth*, *The Big Parade* and *Raise the Red Lantern*. Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou and the other leaders of the fifth Generation have always seen themselves as fated to carry the burden of Chinese culture, a perception which obliges them to reconstruct over-arching visions of the state of the nation's politics and social dynamics. Infinitely more modest, Wang Xiaoshuai contents himself with an intimate account of day to day life as he and many like him live it. Indeed, if he and Beijing's other new generation independents have anything in common beyond their resourcefulness and lack of money, it's their absolute commitment to rooting their work in the street-level realities they have had to cope with all their lives.

In *The Days*, this results in a delicately understated – but piercingly moving – account of the end of a relationship, which at the same time pinpoints a mood of dread and incipient defeat that Wang clearly sees as endemic in China's present political climate. But the film is not at all depressing. On the contrary, the freshness of its modesty and the unconfected immediacy of its emotions make its analysis of a kind of 'everyday madness' curiously cheering.

Tony Rayns

Highlander III: The Sorcerer

Canada/France/United Kingdom 1995

Director: Andy Morahan

Certificate 15	Nanouk Martel
Distributor Entertainment	Action Unit: André Gaumond
Production Companies Transfilm (Canada)/ Initial Groupe (France)/ Fallingcloud (UK)	France: François Thourenot Scotland/Morocco Sue Field
Executive Producers Guy Collins Charles L. Smiley	Director of Photography Steven Chivers
Producer Claude Léger	2nd Unit Photography Allan Smith
Co-producers Jean Cazès Eric Altmayer James Daly	Action Unit Director of Photography Adrian Wild
Line Producer Mychèle Boudrias	Blue Screen Unit Director of Photography John Berrie
Production Co-ordinators Sylvie Boily Johanne Pelletier Hélène Ross	High-speed Photography Denis Pike
Screen: Kristina Birkmayer Scotland: Tori Parry New York: Jodi Berman	Optical Photography Ian Elliott
Production Managers Carole Mondello 2nd Unit: Georges Jardon	Animation Photography Charlie Luce
Action Unit: Michel Siry France: Bernard P. Guiremand Scotland: Dione Orrom	Camera Operators Cary Fisher Daniel Vincelette 2nd Unit/Action Unit/Blue Screen: Maurice Roy
Morocco: Zakaria Alaoui Blue Screen: Georges Jardon	Action Unit Aerial: Georges Archambault Scotland: Peter Allwork New York: Tom Houghton
Unit Managers François Dufour 2nd Unit: Réal Chabot Action Unit: Gilbert Lucu Paul Dupont	Steadicam Operators Alan Lennox Louis de Ernst
France: Gérard Monier Scotland: Keith Hatcher	France: Noël Very Patrick de Ranter Scotland: Kate Robinson
Location Managers Catherine Dawe Benoit Mathieu Action Unit: Louis Plante	Visual Effects Co-ordinator Stuart Galloway
Post-production Supervisor Georges Jardon	Digital Effects Daniel Dellal Pierre Jasmin Annie Normandin Thierry Delatré François Lambert
2nd Unit Director Pierre Magny	Producer: Pierre Raymond Designer: Daniel Leduc
Assistant Directors Pedro Gandol Carole Dubuc Francine Langlois Marc Larose Johanne Boudreau	Optical Effects Supervisor François Aubry
2nd Unit: Josée Drolet Jacques Laberge Action Unit: Tommy Grossman Buck Deachman Marie-Josée Bourassa	Animation Supervisor: Bertrand Langlois
France: Albert Salès Branda Amestoy Scotland: Peter Mcleese Sara Barr Nael Abbas	Key: Thomas Fedoryak
Morocco: Ahmed Abounoun	Animatronics Antonio Vidosa Eric Rosseau
Casting Nadja Rona Vera Miller France: Françoise Combarrière	Editor Yves Langlois
Screenplay Paul Ohl	Production Designers Gilles Aird Ben Morahan
Based on the story by William Panzer, Brad Mirman and characters created by Gregory Widen	Art Design Alain Paroutaud
Script Supervisors France Boudreau 2nd Unit/Action Unit:	Set Decorators Paul Hotte Jean Kazemirchuck Scotland: Gillie Delaf
	Set Dressers Ginette Robitaille Daniel Breton Annie Régol France: Rafael Vicent

Morocco:
Menouer Samiri
Graphic Designer
Carl Lessard
Scenic Artists
Beau Blaireau
Robert Bourdeau
Odette Gaudreau
Storyboard Artist
Craig Wilson
Sculptures
Denis Ampleman
Alain Gagné
Puppeteer
Felix Mirst
Sword Design
José de Braga
Miniatures
Model Shop Consultant:
Gene Rizzardi
Director of Photography:
Dennis Pike
Sculptors:
Dennis Ampleman
Gilles David
Alain Gagné
Special Effects Supervisor
Louis Craig
Special Effects
Co-ordinators
Brian Johnson
Scotland:
Philip Knowles
Pyrotechnics
Jacques Langlois
Costume Design
Jackie Budin
Mario Davignon
Warriors:
Macheline Rouillard
Wardrobe Supervisors
Pierre Perreault
Ginette Magny
Make-up Artists
Nicole Lapiere
Penny Lee
Action Unit:
Johanne Gravel
France:
Agnès Tassel
Scotland:
Amanda Knight
Morocco:
Tazi Asmaa
Special Make-up Effects
Stéphane Dupuis
Charles Carter
Hairstylists
Bob Pritchett
Action Unit:
Marcelo Nestor Padovani
Wig Design
Jerry Altenberg
Title Design
Thomas Fedoryak
François Aubry
Music
J. Peter Robinson
Orchestral Music Performed by
The Munich Symphony
Orchestra
Orchestrations
Michael McCuiston
Larry Rench
Music Supervisor
Paul Di Franco
Songs
"Snake Bar Blues"
by J. Peter Robinson, Tom
Canning, Michael
Rockwell; "Honest Joe" by
and performed by James,
Brian Eno; "Pool Hall
Blues" by J. Peter
Robinson; "Bonny
Portmore", "The
Two Trees" by and
performed by Loreena
McKennitt; "Boom Boom"
by Clark, Weekes,
performed by Definition
of Sound; "Ce He Mise Le
Ulaing" by Patrick
Hutchinson, performed
by Loreena McKennitt;
"Little Muscle" by Brian
Futter, Robert Dickinson,
performed by Catherine
Wheel; "Dummy Krusher"
by Cormac Battle,
Darragh Butler, William
Dalton, Colin Fenelly,
performed by Kerbdog;
"Bluebeard" by the
Coteau Twins, Elizabeth
Fraser, Robin Guthrie,
Simon Raymonde,
performed by The
Coteau Twins
Supervising Sound Editor
Michel B. Bordeleau
Sound Editors
Natalie Fleurant
Isabelle Massicotte

Florence Moureaux
ADR Supervisor
Hubert Fielden
ADR Editors
André Long
Pierre Jules
Sound Recordists
Claude Hazanavicius
Action Unit:
Daniel Masse
France:
Jean Philippe le Roux
Scotland:
Louis Kramer
Music:
Robert Fernandez
Sound Effects Consultant
Fred J. Brown
Foley Artist
Jérôme Lévy
Scottish Research Adviser
Hamish McGuiness
Action Unit Director
Warren Hewlett
Fight Co-ordinator
Jean Frenette
Stunt Co-ordinators
Dave McKeown
Yves Langlois
Japanese Sword Master
Hiroo Mochizuki
Martial Arts Consultant
Yoseikan International
Martial Arts Trainer
Marc Asselin
Animal Wranglers
Snakes:
Sylvain Denis
Birds:
African Lion Safari
Morocco:
Joël Proust

Cast
Christopher Lambert
Connor MacLeod/Russel
Nash
Mario Van Peebles
Kane
Deborah Unger
Alex Johnson/Sarah
Mako
Nakano
Raoul Trujillo
Jean-Pierre Pérouse
Warriors
Martin Neufeld
Stenn
Frederick Y. Okimura
Old Japanese Man
Daniel Do
Takamura
Gabriel Nakon
John
Louis Bertignac
Pierre Bouchet
Michael Jayston
Jack Donovan
Zhenhu Han
Innkeeper
Akira Inoue
Innkeeper's Son
Darcy Laurie
Georges Vitezakis
Bangers
David Francis
Doctor Malloy
Lisa Vitello
Nurse
Matt Holland
Intern
Richard Jutras
Uniform
Liz Macrae
Interviewer
Emidio Michetti
Detective
André Dumansky
Marquis de Condorcet
Charles S. Doucet
Earth Gilker
Cowboys
Paul Hopkins
Tommy
Michael McGill
Medical Examiner
Chip Chupka
Charlie
Patrick Fiery
Captain
Clifford Spencer
Guillotine Man
John Dunn-Hill
Loony Napoleon
Morven Cameron
Receptionist
Vlasta Vrana
Vorisek

8,866 feet
98 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Anamorphic

● The sixteenth century. Following the deaths of his wife Heather and friend Ramirez, 'Immortal' Highlander Connor MacLeod goes to Japan and seeks enlightenment from the sorcerer Nakano in his mountain lair. Rival Immortal Kane surprises the two men, stabbing MacLeod and beheading Nakano. However, the energy released as Nakano's magic transfers itself to Kane causes the chamber to collapse. Kane and his accomplices are trapped inside. MacLeod escapes.

1994. An archaeological dig on the mountain allows Kane and his accomplices to break out, murdering a security guard. Kane sends one associate to seek out MacLeod and murders the other. The Japanese police and US archaeologist Alexa are baffled by the two corpses but Alexa finds a fragment of tartan cloth which she identifies as belonging to the sixteenth century Scottish clan MacLeod. Sensing that a rival Immortal is hunting him, MacLeod leaves his adopted son John in Morocco and goes to New York. Mugged and shot several times, he is taken to hospital. Believing him insane, the authorities put him in an asylum. MacLeod escapes and beheads an emissary of Kane. He thinks back to eighteenth-century France and his relationship with the English woman Sarah.

Arriving in New York, Kane sees a television report about the dig. This leads him to Alexa's lab, then to MacLeod's New York apartment; the two men have an initial skirmish. Detective John Stern is convinced that the hospital slaying is linked to a rash of beheadings in the mid-80s in which MacLeod was also involved. Alexa refuses to tell him anything. In Scotland, MacLeod and Alexa meet, and he fashions a new sword. They adjourn to the pub before making love.

Meanwhile, as Kane searches MacLeod's New York apartment, MacLeod's son phones. Using his shape-shifting powers, Kane meets the boy at Newark airport in the guise of MacLeod and kidnaps him. MacLeod arrives too late to save the boy, but Kane has left a message telling MacLeod where they should meet for their final battle. In the struggle which follows, MacLeod beheads Kane, despite his briefly adopting the guise of Alexa. Reunited with his son and Alexa, MacLeod returns to a new life in Scotland.

● The original *Highlander* film was set mainly in mid-80s New York, with flashbacks to 1536 Scotland. The first sequel begins in 1999, with most of the action set in 2024. The odd decision to make *Highlander III: The Sorcerer* a sequel to one and a prequel to the other is clumsy in the extreme, and infuriating to audiences who have sat through the earlier films.

Highlander II may not have made much sense, but it did have a gloriously tongue-in-cheek turn from Sean Connery, and its action scenes were presented with commendable kinetic verve. *Highlander III* suffers immeasurably from Connery's absence, while its action scenes are comparatively tired.



Beloved Immortal: Christopher Lambert

But its biggest problem is an utter failure of imagination on the part of its writers. The reluctance to push what is essentially a sword-and-sorcery saga even further into sci-fi territory is understandable, but instead the script offers no more than a rehash. Given all of history since 1536 to choose from, they merely give the plot of the first film some Japanese trimmings. Mario Van Peebles, his voice electronically deepened, steps lamely into the cardboard villain's shoes, and Deborah Unger has the supportive female role, previously parcelled out to Roxanne Hart and Virginia Madsen.

The most telling moment is when we learn in passing that Hart's character Brenda, from the original *Highlander*, was murdered in 1987. Only in this cursory fashion is that movie's happy ending explained away. By implication, *Highlander III*'s equally trite ending will have to be superseded by 1999 to explain the opening of *Highlander II*. Attempting to link the three films in any logical sense is futile; the series' priority is simply to engineer MacLeod into a climactic situation where he can chop the head off the next opponent to come along. Its cyclical logic is less that of a conventional narrative than of a computer game. Switch it on and Kane, Kurgan, Katana or another villain will be along for another bout of cut-and-thrust. "There can be only one!" is MacLeod's catchphrase, but it now seems to refer as much to the plot as to the cosmic order he supposedly upholds.

Such a repetitive structure plays havoc with conventional notions of character. In *Highlander III*, MacLeod still grieves for his first wife Heather,

and there are flashbacks to his relationship with Sarah during the French Revolution. Brenda, in narrative terms only seven years dead, is barely mentioned. The audience loses track of who MacLeod is grieving for at any one time. Christopher Lambert, who has a limited acting range, here faces an impossible task – putting emotional flesh on a character with all the weight of a computer image.

Highlander III lacks the second film's manic energy in its action scenes and fills the gaps in between with such a clumsy exposition that it becomes an object lesson in how not to construct a screenplay. Every action is telegraphed in advance and the sole function of the eighteenth century flashbacks ("They need you in Paris, the Revolution has started!") seems to be to pad out the running time. The well-worn device of the hero having a son purely so that he can be kidnapped is disappointing enough; but the way in which this is accomplished is only one of several mind-numbingly obvious links between the set pieces. Kane just happens to be in MacLeod's apartment when the boy phones, and just happens to be in a New York bar when there is news about the archaeological dig.

So much coincidence and contrivance is intrusive, as is the film's hand-me-down visual style. The scenes in Scotland look like ads either for the Scottish Tourist Board or for woolly menswear; and the action scenes are all set in that sanitised netherworld where MTV, bad science fiction and ads for drinks, cars and the privatised electricity industry become one.

Tom Tunney

Holy Matrimony

USA 1994

Director: Leonard Nimoy

Certificate

PG
Distributor
 Rank
Production Companies
 PolyGram Filmed Entertainment presents
 An Interscope Communications production
 In association with Aurora productions
Executive Producers
 Ted Field
 Robert W. Cort
Producers
 William Stuart
 David Madden
 Diane Nabatoff
Co-executive Producers
 Daniel Jason Heffner
 Douglas S. Cook
Production Co-ordinator
 Michelle Giordano
Unit Production Manager
 Daniel Jason Heffner
Location Manager
 Kirk Stepp
2nd Unit Director
 John Moio
Assistant Directors
 Benjamin Rosenberg
 David Katz
 Mark Croll
 David Hallinan
 Cyndi Mladinov
 Bob Wagner
Casting
 Owens Hill
 Rachel Abrams
 Montana:
 Amy Caton Ford
 ADR Voice:
 Barbara Harris
Screenplay
 David Weisberg
 Douglas S. Cook
Script Supervisor
 Mamie Mitchell
Director of Photography
 Bobby Bukowski
Camera Operators
 Michael K. Bucher
 Helicopter:
 Frank Holgate
Steadicam Operators
 Chris Squires
 Paul Taylor
Editor
 Peter E. Berger
Production Designer
 Edward Pisoni
Art Director
 David Crank
Set Decorators
 Scott Carruth
 Alice Faye Smith
Set Dressers
 Rob Bestwina
 Patrick Crowley
 Randal Grimm
 Brian Rud
 Tracee Shuler
 Thorpe Teaney
 William Vaccaro
Scenic Artist
 Steve Eyrse
Special Effects Co-ordinator
 Robert "Smokey" Simokovic
Costume Design
 Deena Appel
Costume Supervisor
 Laura Goldsmith
Make-up Artist
 Kathryn Bihl
Hairstylist
 Theo Mayes
Music/Conductor/Orchestrations
 Bruce Broughton
Music Supervisors
 Sharon Boyle
 Barklie K. Griggs
Music Editor
 Patricia Carlan
Music Co-ordinator
 Richard Henderson

Songs

"Day by Day" by and performed by Kerri Anderson; "Hole" by Carrie Akre, Dave Bosch, James Atkins, Harris Thurmond, performed by Hammerbox; "Roll on Saskatchewan" by and performed by Stompin' Tom Connors
Production Sound Mixer
 Martin Raymond
 Bolger
Music Mixer
 Armin Steiner
ADR Mixer
 Doc Kane
Foley Mixer
 Scott Weber
Sound Re-recording Mixers
 Terry Porter
 Mel Metcalfe
 David J. Hudson
Sound Effects Supervisor
 Fred Judkins
Sound Effects Editors
 Paul Berolzheimer
 Philip A. Hess
 Scott Jennings
 Brian Rizner
 Robert L. Sephton
 C.T. Welch
Foley Artists
 James Moriana
 Jeffrey Wilhoit
Technical Adviser
 Helen Martens
Stunt Co-ordinator
 John Moio

Cast

Patricia Arquette
 Havana
 Joseph Gordon-Levitt
 Zeke
 Armin Mueller-Stahl
 Uncle Wilhelm
 Tate Donovan
 Peter
 John Schuck
 Markowski
 Lois Smith
 Orna
 Courtney B. Vance
 Cooper
 Jeffrey Nordling
 Link
 Richard Riehle
 Mr Greeson
 Mary Pat Gleason
 Officer
 Elaine Byrne
 Bar Woman
 Dan Cossolini
 Bartender
 Lori Alan
 Cleopatra
 Jess Schwidde
 Samuel
 Franz Novak
 Teacher
 Art Weber
 Ted Hoff
 Wes Ries
 Chuck Bucher
 Myron A. Wheeler
 Elders
 Bubba Smith
 Keith Cron
 John Hagen
 Hutterite Boys
 Grace Poole
 Kristy Yetter
 Hutterite Girls
 Jim Gretch
 Charlie Wolf
 Hutterite Women
 Patti Sweeney
 Doreen Daniels
 Gail Holzeimer
 Sonja Eli
 Shainah Novis
 Sonja Drinkwater
 Marilyn Schneider
 Hutterite Women

Sheryl Mott
 Vanessa Picard
 Hutterite Unmarried Women
 Edward L. King
 Husband
 Alan Blumenfeld
 Married Man
 Dusty Lewis
 Man
 Rusty Pegar
 Money Man
 Shannon Everts
 News Reporter
 John Goldes
 Bret Peterson
 Older Boys

Ray Monney
 Pitchman
 Paul Talley
 Security Guard
 Cassie Buchanan
 Tracy
 Bill Nevins
 Don Mogensen
 Tracy's Diner Men
 Penny Redeau
 Tracy's Diner Woman
 8.346 feet
 93 minutes
 Dolby stereo
 In colour

Realising that her job in a show at the Iowa State Fair offers few prospects, Havana and her boyfriend Peter steal the fair's takings from its owner, Greeson. When Peter discovers the robbery has been recorded on security video, he insists that they travel to the Hutterite colony of his childhood in Alberta, to evade FBI capture. His mother Orna, 12-year-old brother Zeke, and the Hutterite elders, led by Uncle Wilhelm, welcome Peter, who, as part of his cover, announces that the unconventional Havana is his fiancée. She is appalled but reluctantly marries into the devoutly Protestant sect.

Peter hides the stolen money in a barn and, after a drinking spree, dies in a car crash. Uncle Wilhelm tells Peter's disruptive widow that to remain with the colony she must follow the biblical rules of Deuteronomy and marry Zeke. Reluctantly, Havana agrees and the marriage takes place. Zeke finds the money and Wilhelm insists that the couple return it to Greeson. They set off for Iowa, with FBI agent Markowski on their tail. Havana tries to leave Zeke, but realises that he is in danger from Markowski, who wants the money for himself. After several close shaves, Havana and Zeke stow aboard a train bound for Iowa. Havana reveals her real name, Betsy, to Zeke who extols the importance of family. At the fair, Havana sends Zeke to return the money, but on seeing Markowski she risks arrest to protect him, and Markowski is finally stopped. The money is returned and Zeke pleads successfully with Greeson and FBI chief Cooper for Havana's liberty. Havana returns Zeke to the Hutterites, promising that Betsy will return one day. First she must visit her own family.

There is very little holy about *Holy Matrimony*, which is really a tart-finds-heart storyline, welded to an auxiliary boy's coming-of-age plot, and decked out like a romping low-key thriller. These are not unusual themes, although the film compares two settings - chaotic, godless fair versus the ordered religious community - to dramatise and amplify the tension. This contrast between Havana and Zeke's backgrounds is used, as an engine for the film's many comic moments. Patricia Arquette reprises the white-trash character she played in *True Romance* as the sassy, gum-snapping Havana, who, even in the sobriety of a Hutterite wedding dress, totters

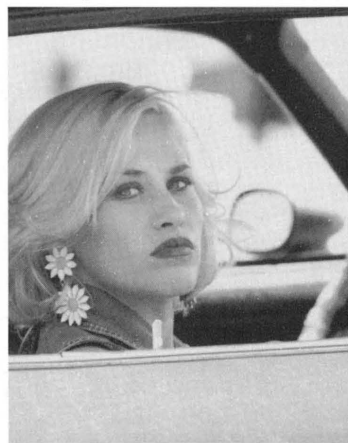
about in gold stilettos. Her values are purely material and her independent streak is anathema to the severe predictability of life in the Hutterite community. ("Marilyn wasn't always Marilyn," she says darkly to some fairground chorus girls in the moments prior to the robbery, "Marilyn had to do stuff to be Marilyn.")

Not that Zeke's circumscribed life is any more secure than Havana's. Her arrival and their foray into the outside world confuses his hitherto impervious religious peace. He changes from a solemn, dour child to one capable of thinking on his feet. Strict obedience to a biblical rule forces him, aged 12, to marry and fill a patriarch's breeches, but the ability to fake a passage from the Bible helps him to win clemency from the FBI for Havana/Betsy. The best path, Leonard Nimoy's film implies, is a middle way, combining worldliness with a folksy morality, one that respects family and individual alike.

This theme might be said to have been borrowed from Peter Weir's thriller *Witness*, in which a cop enters an Amish community and finds a love interest which runs counter to the sect's rules. Like Weir, Nimoy expresses the Hutterites' uncomplicated withdrawal from the world through *mise en scène*. Alberta is full of great, empty skies and wide cornfields; yet the link with nature is shattered in the town and fairground scenes, where the skies are never glimpsed and the food comes in packets.

That said, one of the most interesting and underdeveloped aspects of *Holy Matrimony* is the interplay between Havana and her alter ego Betsy. The two names - suggesting a wished-for cosmopolitan chic balanced by a homely, all-American femininity - illuminates Arquette's character, raising issues about desire and identity. Unlike Harrison Ford's desire in *Witness*, Arquette's has no sexual expression: Peter is killed off quickly and, in a family film such as this, Zeke is not an acceptable substitute. A goodbye kiss from Betsy and a request for deferment - "Come back when I'm 18!" - is as far as it gets. Character development is not a strong point here, but perhaps it doesn't need to be. Nimoy has made a deft, if predictable picture in which the feel-good factor is high.

Louise Gray



Papa don't preach: Patricia Arquette

I Like It Like That

USA 1994

Director: Darnell Martin

Certificate

15
Distributor
 Columbia TriStar
Production Company
 A Think Again production
 For Columbia TriStar
Executive Producer
 Wendy Finerman
Producers
 Ann Carli
 Lane Janger
Co-producer
 Diana Phillips
Production Co-ordinators
 Jennifer Roth
 Timothy T.P. Robbins
Unit Production Manager
 Diana Phillips
Location Manager
 Margot Emily Lulick
Location Supervisor
 Lys Hooper
Assistant Directors
 H.H. Cooper
 Kia B. Puriefoy
Casting
 Meg Simon
Screenplay
 Darnell Martin
Script Supervisor
 Karen Kelsall
Director of Photography
 Alexander Gruszynski
Camera Operator
 Jim McConkey
Editor
 Peter C. Frank
Production Designer
 Scott Chambliss
Art Director
 Teresa Carriker-Thayer
Set Decorator
 Susie Goulder
Set Dressers
 Jerry Pineo
 Doug Fecht
 Willie Roache
 Greco
Scenic Artist
 Elizabeth Linn
Storyboard Artist
 Samuel J. DeSanto
Costume Design
 Sandra Hernandez
Wardrobe Supervisor
 Rose Trimarco Cuervo
Make-up
 Joseph Cuervo
Hairstylist
 Judi Goodman
Title Design
 Balsmeyer and Everrett
Music
 Sergio George
Music Supervisor
 Ann Carli
Music Editor
 Nicholas Myers
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Try a Little Tender-ness" by H. Woods, J. Campbell, R. Connelly, performed by Barrio Boyzz; "I Like It" by Manny Rodriguez, Tony Pabon, performed by The Blackout Allstars; "Come Baby Come" by Louis Sharp, Joey Gardner, performed by K7; "Brinquen Salten" by E. Franco, M. Ruiz, performed by Shab-bakan; "Like Father Like Son" by R. Rivera, M. Galarza, performed by Main One: The Ghetto Child; "I'm Tryin' to Tell 'em" by F. Joe, Diamond D, performed by Fat Joe; "Si tu no te fueras" by J. Guittierrez, N. Frank, performed by Marc Anthony; "You Better Change" by L. Vega, T. Davis, performed by The Cover Girls; "Black-out" by P. Ramirez, R. Gutierrez, performed by A Lighter Shade of Brown; "Eres Tu" by Edwin Rivera Mercado, performed by Jerry

Rivera; "Forever" by Robert Cliviles, Duran Ramos, performed by C&C Music Factory; "Latin Lingo" by L. Muggerud, L. Freese, S. Reyes, performed by Cypress Hill
Supervising Sound Editor
 Wendy Hedin
Sound Editors
 Deborah Emanuel
 Magdelaine Valaitis
 Louis Corbino
ADR Editors
 Deborah Wallach
 Hal Levinsohn
Production Mixer
 Rosa Howell-Thornhill
Sound Re-recorder
 Michael Barry
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Manny Siverio

Cast

Lauren Vélez
 Lisette Linares
 Jon Seda
 Chino Linares
 Tomas Melly
 Li'l Chino Linares
 Desiree Casado
 Minnie Linares
 Isaiah Garcia
 Pee Wee Linares
 Jesse Borrego
 Alexis
 Lisa Vidal
 Magdalena Soto
 Griffin Dunne
 Stephen Price
 Rita Moreno
 Rosaria Linares
 Vincent Laresca
 Angel
 E.O. Nolasco
 Tito
 Sammy Melendez
 Victor
 Jose Soto
 Chris
 Gloria Irizarry
 Mrs Gonzalez
 Emilio Del Pozo
 Mr Soto
 Donald Jackson
 Jack
 Gary Perez
 Father Jaime
 Scott Jarred Cohen
 Ritchie Soto
 Martha Speakes
 Hefty Woman
 Marina Durrell
 Cookie
 Lou Ferguson
 Joe
 Juan Cruz
 David
 Michael McKinney
 Tour
 Casey E. Rodriguez
 Freddy
 Joe Quintero
 Pavnbroker
 Daphne Rubin-Vega
 Modeling School Director
 Tookie A. Smith
 Val
 Fat Joe Da Gangsta
 Biker Inmate
 Luis A. Marrero
 Tony Mendez
 Freddy Correa
 Ricky Mendez
 Jerry Rivera
 Pablo Herrera
 Billy Lux
 Photographer
 Larry Attile
 Dispatcher
 Marta Vidal
 Santera

9.578 feet
 106 minutes

Dolby stereo
 In colour
 DuArt
 Prints by
 Technicolor



After hours: Lauren Velez, Griffin Dunne

● Lisette and her husband Chino live in a small apartment in the Bronx with their three children, trying to survive on Chino's meagre wages as a bicycle messenger. Lisette is unhappy with her life, as her husband seems to pay too much attention to Magdalena, the unmarried mother living next door, and spends what little money he earns playing the numbers. She also has to cope with the problems of her transvestite brother Alexis, who is not accepted by their parents.

During a blackout in the neighbourhood, Chino goes looting to get a stereo. He is arrested, and Lisette cannot raise the \$1,500 bail. Meanwhile her eldest son, eight-year-old L'il Chino, decides to raise some money himself, even if it means stealing and doing errands for the young drug dealers in the neighbourhood. In desperation, Lisette tries to get some modelling work, but instead gets offered money to babysit a hot young Latino band called The Mendez Brothers for an evening. She goes to visit her husband in prison; he tells her he doesn't want her to take the job, that he would rather she go on welfare. The evening turns out to be a meal with The Mendez Brothers and the record executive, Stephen Price, who wants to sign them. Initially, he doesn't like Lisette, but she convinces him that she knows a lot about Latino music, and he decides to hire her as his assistant.

Price drives Lisette home in his sports car. Chino's friends lie and tell him that they saw her having sex with Price. Magdalena's father bails Chino out of jail, after she says that the father of her baby is Chino. Thinking Lisette is unfaithful, Chino moves in with Magdalena. Lisette begins a brief sexual affair with her boss, but grudgingly lets Chino move back into their apartment after Magdalena confesses that the baby is not his. Lisette and Chino keep separate lives while her career gets more successful, until, on a visit to the beach to film The Mendez Brothers' latest video, the pair are reunited.

● Darnell Martin's directing debut is a Cinderella tale with a twist. Her protagonist doesn't need a fairy godmother or a Prince Charming to achieve a happy ending, she does it all by herself. This is a test indeed, since writer/director Martin gives Lisette as difficult a start in life as Cinders ever

had - no money, no job, delinquent children and a good-for-nothing husband (expertly played with full Latin machismo by Jon Seda).

Although this romantic comedy-drama could have taken place in any borough of New York, Martin sets it in a community of South Bronx Latinos. Their fiery outbursts, touching on everything from the stigma of welfare to sexual politics in the office, give it a refreshingly zany feel. Unlike Spike Lee, who of late has tended to ram his opinions down our throats, Martin manages to say much about race, sexuality and life in New York without resorting to shock tactics.

Instead, her central characters address these issues tangentially. Lisette's humiliation when having to go on welfare is movingly portrayed by Lauren Velez, while a scene in which Alexis deals with the hurt of being rejected by his parents comes across as an almost accidental aside. Martin also works plenty of humour into her film, most often through the chauvinistic Chino, who refuses ever to admit his mistakes, and L'il Chino, who seems dangerously close to following in his father's footsteps.

The one character not well drawn is record executive Stephen Price. Griffin Dunne plays him as a parody in the *Spinal Tap* mould. Price's only function is to prove the point that males are not to be trusted unless they are under 20 or transvestite. Indeed, the scene in which Lisette discovers during sex that Price is even more self-obsessed than her husband may induce men in the audience to look away. But Price is also there to show that white, middle-aged record company executives are the wrong people to be choosing the ethnic music we get to hear, and that there should be more opportunities in the music business (and for that matter, the movie industry) for people who know what they're talking about - a point reinforced by the salsa and samba soundtrack.

The film demands to be taken on its own terms as a romantic comedy. The message that Lisette can do much better on her own without the help of any of the men in her life is well argued. It is only spoiled during the end-credits sequence when we get to watch the making of The Mendez Brothers' video, and Chino and Lisette are reunited.

Joanna Berry

I Love a Man in Uniform

Canada 1993

Director: David Wellington

Certificate

Not Yet Issued

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Alliance

Communications

Miracle Pictures

present

A Miracle Pictures

Production

With the participation

of Telefilm Canada and

the Ontario Film

Development

Corporation

Executive Producer

Alexandra Raffé

Producer

Paul Brown

Production Co-ordinator

Tina Grewal

Production Manager

Armand Leo

Location Managers

Douglas Brisebois

Tony Liwan

Richard Craven

Opening Sequence Director

Peter Wellington

Virginia Rankin

Assistant Directors

Stephen Reynolds

Cynthia Gillespie

Lewin Webb

Casting

Susan Forrest

Screenplay

David Wellington

Story Editor

Walter Donohue

Script Supervisor

Leslie Druker

Director of Photography

David Franco

Opening Sequence:

Mark Caswell

Editor

Susan Shipton

Opening Sequence:

Peter Wellington

Production Designer

John Dondertman

Set Decorator

Megan Less

Scenic Artists

David Barry Covert

Ron Troost

Special Effects

Ted Ross

Costume Design

Beth Pasternak

Costume Supervisor

Debbie Williams

Make-up

Judy Murdock

Hair stylist

Lucy Orton

Title Design

Johanna Weinstein

Opticals

Film Effects

Music

Ron Sures and The

Tragically Hip

Music Supervisor

Ron Sures

Music Editor

Alastair Gray

Songs

"Radio Show", "Pigeon

Camera" by and

performed by The

Tragically Hip

Supervising Sound Editor

Jane Tattersall

Dialogue Editors

Penny Hozy

Dale Sheldrake

Foley Recordist

Jack Heeren

Sound Mixers

Bryan Day

Jo Loo

Re-recorders

Joe Grimaldi

Jessica Casavant

Keith Marsh

Sound Effects Editor

Sean Kelly

Foley Artist

Andy Malcolm

Stunt Co-ordinator

Larry McLean

Gun Handler

John 'Frenchie' Berger

Cast

Tom McCamus

Henry Adler

Brigitte Bako

Charlie Warner

Kevin Tighe

Frank

David Hemblen

Father

Alex Karzis

Bruce

Graham McPherson

Mr Pearson

Daniel MacIvor

Director

Wendy Hopkins

Casting Director

Kirsten Kiefferle

Anita

Paulina Gillis

Janet

Dana Brooks

Marilyn

Steve Ambrose

Bank Robber

Michael Hogan

Detective Rich

Mark Melymick

Lt. Edam

Cynthia Gillespie

Crimewave A.D.

Jack Nichols

Archer

Dick Grant

Sgt. Robin

Victor Ertmanis

Alley Cop

Rino Romano

Clyde

Maureen McKay

Bonnie

Matt Cooke

Sgt. Cheddar

Ken MacNeil

Dirt Bag

Mark Wilson

Butch

Matthew Ferguson

Edward Nichols

Albert Schultz

Businessman

Richard Blackburn

Bullet Salesman

Henry Czerny

Joseph Riggs

Nancy Cser

Sheila Riggs

Graham Losee

Jack Riggs

Yon Flores

Kenny

Jhene Erwin

Tara

Christopher Marren

Sgt. Brown

Moreen Virgin

Radio Voice

Rafal Mickiewicz

Stand in

8,730 feet

97 minutes

In colour

● A policeman is shot and killed in a Canadian city street. Among the crowd of onlookers is 31-year-old Henry Adler, an unsuccessful actor who works in a bank where he is under pressure to give up his thespian aspirations. With little social contact in his life other than an unhappy relationship with his father, the chance of a part as cop Flanagan - in a television drama series called *Crimewave* - appears to be a lifeline. A combination of unexpected vehemence and dedicated preparation wins him the role.

At a costume fitting, Henry meets Charlie Warner, who plays a prostitute in the show. Henry persuades the wardrobe mistress to let him take his uniform home to practice in. There is a robbery at the bank, a security guard is killed and, at gun point, Henry is forced to open the vault by a vicious robber. It is then a small step from rehearsing at home to walking the streets. He helps a real policeman subdue someone resisting arrest, using dialogue written for his fictional character.

On set, the intensity that Henry brings to his role is well received, and he starts rehearsing with Charlie, who seems to like him. However, at the bank he threatens a customer and in the ensuing argument with his boss, he quits his job. When a stropmy motorist refuses to submit to his dubious authority, he is humiliated. Ever more confused between his different roles, Henry takes Charlie to a hospital, to see his father who has had a stroke. When she points out to him that they are not having a relationship, he comes close to threatening her.

As Henry finishes filming his role, his father dies. He steals his costume and walks the streets, finding a police car in an alley, with one of the drivers inside receiving favours from a prostitute. Frank, the other policeman, asks him for help and Henry finds himself col-



Blue steal: Tom McCamus

lecting bribes from a drug dealer. When the dealer flaunts his authority, Henry shoots him dead. He goes to Charlie's flat and terrorises her. Then he too picks up a prostitute. Back home, watching the death of his character on television, Henry shoots himself. Next morning, his body is found by a policeman who thinks he is a colleague.

This edgily fetishistic debut from Canadian writer-director Wellington opens with a cliché – the brutal murder of an un-named man in uniform. There is a slightly more point to the standard public servant slaying sequence here than usual. The idea that a policeman walks a thin line between authority and violent death is integral to the almost sexual fascination the role begins to exercise over downtrodden anti-hero Henry Adler.

Wellington allows the odd flashy moment – the camera following a torn fragment of the dead cop's uniform as it is carried away on the wind – but otherwise he focuses on Henry's developing obsession with such a stern discipline that an atmosphere of authentic perversity is created. The swing of a night stick and the flash of a handcuff become visual punctuation marks. Dialogue is sometimes all but drowned out by the creak of leather. As the production notes assert breathlessly, the costume designer Beth Pasternak "wanted to design uniforms that looked so good the crew would be fighting over them after the shoot." She succeeded. Identification did not end there. "The director and (lead) actor not only sound alike", we are informed with unnerving cheerfulness, "they actually look very much alike."

At first, all this is fun to watch. Tom McCamus – his features exactly half way between Lou Reed and John Cale – is a compelling presence in the lead role. As long as he is poised between tragedy and comedy – acquiring an unaccustomed potency by acting the hardass in auditions, or introducing snippets of absurdly overheated cop dialogue into life at the bank – he is very funny and engaging, like Travis Bickle with a mortgage. Once he goes over the brink of madness however, he just becomes pathetic, and without another strong character for the viewer to identify with, the whole thing becomes depressing.

Brigitte Bako's role as Charlie is seriously underwritten. She starts out as a reasonably sassy actress disillusioned with victim roles, but in a sinister dramatised example of real life imitating fiction, a victim is exactly what she turns out to be. As is often the way of these things, the more inexorable Henry's inexorable spiral into personal degradation becomes, the less interesting it gets. Wellington's sense of mischief – shown off to worthy effect early on in such fine lines as: "chuckles here is out of commission" – rather deserts him as the film builds towards its inevitably messy climax. Hopefully it's not gone for good.

Ben Thompson

Immortal Beloved

United Kingdom/USA 1994

Director: Bernard Rose

Certificate

15

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

Majestic Films presents

An Icon production

Executive Producer

Steve McEveety

Producer

Bruce Davey

Production Supervisors

Jan Balzer

Kateřina Schauerová

Production Co-ordinator

Lil Heyman

Production Manager

Jaroslav Kulčera

Unit Manager

Ivan Štělka

Unit Production Managers

Chris Finigan

Jim Lemley

Location Manager

Zdeněk Fiala

Assistant Directors

Lee Cleary

Trey Batchelor

Ken Paull

Petr Hartl

Marek Juráček

Casting

Marion Dougherty

Czech Republic:

Petr Hartl

Screenplay

Bernard Rose

Script Supervisor

Eva Cabrera

Director of Photography

Peter Suschitzky

Camera Operators

Jiří Maxa

Colin Corby

Steadicam Operators

Peter Robertson

Simon Bray

Visual Effects

Mike Fink

Trisha Ashford

Editor

Dan Rae

Production Designer

Jiří Hlupý

Art Director

John Myhre

Set Decorator

Olga Rosenfeldová

Set Dresser

Marek Hlupý

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Garth Inns

Special Effects

Ian Corbould

Paul Courbold

Jiří Zavřel

Costume Design

Maurizio Millenotti

Costume Supervisor

Rosemary Burrows

Make-up

Supervisor:

Fabrizio Sforza

Artists:

Alessandra Sforza

Enrico Jacopini

Jiří Farkaš

Hairstylist

Grazia de Rossi

Music Director

Georg Solti

Music Supervisor

John Stronach

Music Extracts

"Violin Concerto in

D Major, Op. 61",

"Symphony No. 5 in

C minor, Op. 67",

"Symphony No. 6 in

F Major, Op. 68",

"Symphony No. 9 in

D Minor, Op. 125",

"Symphony No. 7 in

A Major, Op. 92" by

Ludwig van Beethoven,

performed by the

London Symphony

Orchestra; "Piano Trio

No. 4 in D Major, Op. 70,

No. 1 (Ghost)" by

Ludwig

van Beethoven,

performed by Emanuel

Ax, Pamela Frank, Yo-Yo

Ma; "Für Elise" by

Ludwig van Beethoven,

performed by Murray

Perahia; "String Quartet,

Op. 130" by Ludwig van

Beethoven, performed

by Juilliard String

Quartet; "Christus am

Olberge, Oratorio, Op.

85" by Ludwig van

Beethoven, performed

by Choeurs et Orchestre

National de Lyon

Post-production

Sound Supervisor

Nigel Holland

Sound Mixers

Peter Glossop

Zdeněk Mátych

Stunt Co-ordinator

Ladislav Lahoda

Cast

Gary Oldman

Ludwig van Beethoven

Jeroen Krabbe

Anton Schindler

Johanna Ter Steege

Joanna van Beethoven

Valeria Golino

Julia Guicciardi

Isabella Rossellini

Countess Anna

Maria Erdody

Marco Hofschneider

Karl van Beethoven

Luigi Diberti

Count Guicciardi

Matthew North

Young Karl van

Beethoven

Leo Faulkner

Young Beethoven

Miriam Margulies

Frau Strelcher

Gerard Horan

Johann van Beethoven

Fintan McKeown

Beethoven's Father

Rory Edwards

Count Gallenberg

Geno Lechner

Josephine von Bruns-
vik

Christopher Fulford

Caspar van Beethoven

Ilannes Flaschberger

Count Deym

Jan Kuzella

Policeman

Donal Gibson

Holz

Jan Censky

Captain

Jindra Petráková

Nanette

Marek Vasut

Policeman

Alexandra Pigg

Theresa van Beethoven

Michael Culkin

Hotsevar

Sandra Voe

Frau Prolisch

Barbara Srncova

Servant

Hugo Kaminsky

Magistrate

Tomas Hanak

Jacob Raicz

Stanislav Hybler

Sergeant

Jiri Patočka

Pock-marked Tramp

Michael Arthur Miller

Toothless Drunk

Petr Pospíchal

Thin Man

Pavel Vondruška

Aristocrat

Ladislav Kazda

Landlord

10,835 feet

120 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Anamorphic

Ludwig van Beethoven is dead. Vienna is in mourning. Even in death, mystery surrounds the composer, whose will bequeaths his worldly goods to his "Immortal Beloved". No-one – least of all his relations who are incensed by their treatment – knows who this woman can be, but Schindler, the composer's secretary, vows to uncover her identity.

In a series of encounters, each occasioning its own flashbacks, Schindler attempts to unravel the strands of Beethoven's tangled love life. He meets the countess Julia Guicciardi. Years earlier, a beautiful adolescent, she gave Beethoven access to the Viennese *beau monde* which, she recalls, was suspicious of the composer's political views: was he not an admirer of Napoleon? Bewitched by her beauty, Ludwig had dedicated a piano sonata to Julia: perhaps she was his Immortal Beloved.

Schindler also travels to Hungary to meet the Countess Anna Marie Erdody. She remembers seeing Beethoven for the first time at a performance of his music, when his deafness first became apparent to his public. She comforted Beethoven, living with him through one of his life's few periods of contentment, but was she his greatest love?

Schindler is more and more intrigued by Beethoven's relationship with Joanna, wife of the composer's brother, Caspar. Another brother, Johann, maintains that Beethoven hated women; as proof he cites an incident when Beethoven first met Joanna. She flirted with him; he denounced her to Caspar as a common whore. No man who behaved like that could ever truly love a woman.

But Schindler learns more: about a fight between Caspar and Ludwig which only ended when Joanna told Ludwig that his brother was dying of consumption; and about the legal battle after Caspar's death, when Ludwig won custody of Joanna's son Karl. Intent on turning him into a concert pianist, Beethoven bullied the boy mercilessly, refusing to allow him to see his mother. Schindler realises that Beethoven thought Karl was his own son. The composer had an affair with Joanna and beneath his protestations of hatred lay a lifelong love. Joanna was Beethoven's Immortal Beloved, but this knowledge, and the rewards that go with it, cannot compensate for the way the composer had treated her. Great art cannot obliterate her painful memories.

When, in Julien Temple's *The Great Rock 'N' Roll Swindle*, Sid Vicious brings his rendition of 'My Way' to a rousing climax by pulling a gun and shooting into the audience, he gives a sardonic twist to the Romantic figure of the artist as an outsider, tormented by the demands of the public and the marketplace. Even punk preferred its artists to be tormented and to show it. The agony guarantees their genius, their separateness from us.

As Benjamin Britten once remarked, the rot started with Beethoven. He was the prototype of the tortured genius,

his deafness an emblem of that condition of being in the world, but not of it. Bridging the gap between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, between Classicism and Romanticism, Beethoven prefigured generations of misunderstood geniuses who could only be sullied by contact with the vulgar, the mass audience. Gunslinging Sid Vicious reduced the stereotype to absurdity while at the same time subscribing to its power.

Gary Oldman played Sid Vicious in Alex Cox's *Sid and Nancy*, and now plays Beethoven in *Immortal Beloved*. While not quite portraying the composer as a proto-punk, Gary Oldman invests him with something of the rock star's sneery truculence. The script provides its own gloss, at one point demanding that Beethoven indulge in that quintessential act of rock 'n' roll bravado, throwing furniture through a hotel window. Pouting and strutting, his accent sliding across vast swathes of Central Europe, Oldman gives us the artist in self-destruct mode. Thus Beethoven underwrites the film, but to what end if the composer is portrayed as just an irritating little fart?

Everything about *Immortal Beloved* – not least its title – is judiciously old-fashioned. Declining to follow the current trend for performing Beethoven's music on instruments of his period, the film-makers obstinately choose a modern orchestra playing modern instruments – which is no longer the modern way. No doubt it suits the soundtrack, which favours volume throughout. Every footfall, every scrape of a chair-leg, is magnified, as if such hyper-realism could take us into a realm beyond the merely human.

Not that the film overlooks the minutiae that make for a worldly authenticity. The composer is variously called van Beethoven, von Beethoven, Ludwig, Luigi and Louis, all of which are authentic. At another level, the many forenames suggest that he is a man for all Europe, which suits the film's mythifying. Beethoven was indeed impressed by the new pianos being made in England – his Broadwood recently toured concert halls throughout Europe. It's an obscure logic that has a coachman say "Ja mein Herr" when everyone around him is speaking English, but the range of accents on display is not only a product of multinational casting: it can also be taken to represent the variety of accents in a nineteenth century capital before mass travel had begun to eradicate regionalisms.

Such tiny details show that someone has done their homework, yet they never add more than decoration, knowing nudges that try to convince us that this is how it really was. The narrative requires Beethoven's genius to guarantee it, but that cannot obscure the fact that this Beethoven – authentic or not – is repressed, thuggish and a boor. Shades of *Amadeus* haunt *Immortal Beloved*, but the zest that enlivened Peter Schaffer's play and Milos Forman's film is not in evidence here.

Nick Kimberley

I.Q.

USA 1994

Director: Fred Schepisi

Certificate
U
Distributor
UIP
Production Company
Sandollar
Executive Producers
Scott Rudin
Sandy Gallin
Producers
Carol Baum
Fred Schepisi
Co-producer
Neil Machlis
Unit Production Managers
Neil Machlis
Michele Imperato
Location Manager
Amy Herman
Post-production Supervisor
Robert Le Tet
Assistant Directors
Frank Capra III
John Wildermuth
Angela Tortu
Casting
David Rubin
Voice:
Barbara Harris
Screenplay
Andy Breckman
Michael Leeson
Story
Andy Breckman
Script Supervisor
Mary Bailey
Director of Photography
Jan Baker
2nd Unit Directors of Photography
Alec Hirschfeld
Tom Houghton
Camera Operator
Bruce MacCallum
Steadicam Operator
Kyle Rudolph
Editor
Jill Bilcock
Production Designer
Stuart Wurtzel
Art Director
Wray Steven Graham
Set Decorator
Gretchen Rau
Set Dressers
David Scott Gagnon
Byron Lovelace
Mike Leather
Martin Lazowicz
Victor Zolfo
Scenic Artists
Jon Carl Ringbom
Peter Hackman
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Stan Parks
Special Effects
Daniel Sudick
Costume Design
Ruth Myers
Costume Supervisor
Michelle Kurpaska
Make-up
Key:
Michael Laudati
C. Romania Ford
Hairstylist
Key:
Michael Kriston
Francesca Paris
Title Design
Alex Stitt
Music
Jerry Goldsmith
Music Performed by
The Victorian
Philharmonic
Orchestra
Solo Violin:
Rudolf Osadnik
Music Conductor
Jerry Goldsmith
Orchestrations
Alexander Courage
Arthur Morton
Music Editor
Kenneth Hall

Music Production
Co-ordinator
Maurie Sheldon
Music Preparation
Bob Bornstein
Songs/Music Extracts
"Cocktails for Two" by
Sam Coslow, Arthur
Johnston, performed
by Spike Jones; "Tutti
Frutti" by Richard
Penniman, Joe Lubin,
Dorothy LaBostrie,
performed by Little
Richard; "Sh-Boom
(Life Could Be a
Dream)" by James
Keyes, Carl Feaster,
Floyd McRae, Claude
Reaster, James
Edwards, performed
by The Crew Cuts;
"White City" by John
Kaye; "Roses from the
South" by Johann
Strauss Jr., performed
by The Chicago
Symphony Orchestra
Supervising Sound Editor
Peter Burgess
Sound Editors
Glenn Newnham
James Harvey
Dialogue Editors
Livia Ruzic
Cindy Clarkson
ADR Supervisor
Terry Rodman
Foley Mixer
Steve Burgess
Sound Mixer
Danny Michael
Music Recorder/Mixer
Robin Gray
Re-recording Mixers
Peter Fenton
Martin Oswin
Foley Artist
Gerard Long
Research Consultant
Carolyn Chriss
Stunt Co-ordinator
Joe Dunne
Cast
Tim Robbins
Ed Walters
Meg Ryan
Catherine Boyd
Walter Matthau
Albert Einstein
Lou Jacobi
Kurt Godel
Gene Saks
Boris Podolsky
Joseph Maher
Nathan Liebkecht
Stephen Fry
James Morland
Tony Shalhoub
Bob Watters
Frank Whaley
Frank
Charles Durning
Louis Bamberger
Keene Curtis
Eisenhower
Alice Playten
Gretchen
Danny Zorn
Dennis
Helen Hanft
Rose
Roger Berlind
Duncan
Arthur Berwick
Timothy Jerome
John McDonough
Academics
Lewis J. Stadlen
Moderator
Jeff Brooks
Reporter
Rex Robbins
Richard Woods
Suits
Daniel Von Barga
Secret Service Agent

Jack Koenig
First Reporter
Sol Frierder
Professor Loewenstein
Michelle Naimo Bird
Nurse
Theodore Conant
Scotty Bloch
Chet Carlin
Alice Drummond
Leo Leyden
Le Clanché du Rand
Brook Berlind
Dinner Guests

8.647 feet
96 minutes
Bolyby stereo
Prints by
Deluxe
Anamorphic

Princeton, NJ. The mid-50s. Celebrated physicist Albert Einstein is concerned about his niece, Catherine Boyd, who is engaged to be married to James, an accomplished but uncaring experimental psychologist. Catherine and James stop in a local garage, where Ed, a mechanic, instantly falls in love with Catherine. Finding her pocket watch in the garage, Ed takes it to her address, where he encounters her uncle. Einstein introduces Ed to his three friends, Godel, Liebkecht and Podolsky, and asks him to help them retrieve some objects they have lost up a tree while playing badminton. Einstein and Ed strike up a friendship that the professor seeks to cultivate further as soon as he realises Ed's feelings for his niece.

Einstein and his friends contrive to meet Ed regularly at his garage. They hatch a plan whereby Ed will masquerade as a physicist and deliver a paper on nuclear fusion at a forthcoming international symposium at Princeton. Catherine is surprised by Ed's hidden capabilities and is further intrigued after his success at the symposium, where he is hailed as a genius. After the reception, Einstein fakes a heart tremor to divert Catherine away from James. She and Ed take Einstein home, but he recovers and they stop at a café where Catherine and Ed dance.

The press get hold of the nuclear fusion story and Ed becomes a celebrity. James, out to humiliate Ed, stages a public test of his IQ. With the surreptitious assistance of the scientists, Ed scores an IQ of 186. On a sailing trip without James, Catherine admits to Ed that she loves him.

President Eisenhower visits Princeton to encourage Ed to start work on a nuclear-fusion powered space rocket to compete with the Russians. En route to a press conference, Ed confesses the truth to Catherine, who has found the flaw in Ed's paper on nuclear fusion. James announces at the conference that the paper was in fact a plagiarism of an unpublished paper by Einstein. Einstein asserts that, with the help of Ed's hoax and Catherine's calculations, he has conclusively disproven Soviet claims of possessing cold fusion technology. Ed and Catherine unhappily part but are bought together at last by the final machinations of Einstein and his friends.

With heartwarming homilies such as "never lose your sense of wonder" and "don't let your brain interfere with your heart", *I.Q.* pitches its self-consciously sentimental charm

as if it were a *Readers Digest* story illustrated by Norman Rockwell and bought to you courtesy of Forrest Gump Enterprises Inc. Like *Forrest Gump*, *I.Q.* works on the simple conceit of juxtaposing the small town humdrum with the global-historic (and cosmic), but does justice to neither.

Because the film's purblind sentimental register bleeds into historical nostalgia, all potential comic moments are neutered. For example, the scene where Ed, having been made over into a stereotypical approximation of a dishevelled physics genius to address the symposium, is played for tooth-rotting sweetness rather than for the comedy of embarrassment such a moment could present. Cue shots of Ed haltingly delivering the paper, gazing misty-eyed at his muse and instantly finding the confidence to fake it successfully.

Such moments are not helped by the constant presence of Einstein's three comic stooges - Godel, Podolsky and Liebkecht - each progressively more of a caricature of the Jewish Eastern European émigré intellectual than Matthau's Einstein, who is played as an unkempt, caring uncle with a talent for self-deprecating one-liners. If nothing else, *I.Q.* will be of paradigmatic value to students researching a thesis on the Representation of Scientists in Popular Cinema. Gags about funny foreigners getting culturally acclimatised are far too familiar. See Einstein on a motorbike! Observe the three stooges in a convertible digging Chuck Berry! Its not that these gags could not be funny, its just that the film is so unimaginative it cannot muster the required degree of irony.

This is part of the larger problem with *I.Q.*; it refuses to mine the incongruities around class and the status of intellect that might have made it more interesting. Instead, we become so accustomed to the spectacle of four venerable old gentlemen spying on Catherine, that the scenario starts to look a little creepy. Schepisi fails to foreground the subtext of voyeurism and remote control that underwrites the film's sexual politics. "She doesn't know what she wants", Einstein says of Catherine at one point. Ryan's interpretation of the character as a ditsy bobbysoxer with a Maths degree is little more than a blank centre to the film, focusing and absorbing the varieties of male desire. In fact, the film's intense and wearing sentimentality might be read as symptomatic of denial in the face of this latent meaning.

It is difficult to say exactly when *I.Q.* becomes so insufferable that one seeks solace in the more interesting reading, but it is not difficult to suggest why. More remarkable, but equally indicative of the film's complacency, is the underuse of its cast. Matthau, a great master of truculence, is denied any chance to exhibit jowly disdain. Robbins is exclusively a good-natured grease monkey who wears his wind-cheater well, and Fry is recognisably anal as the petulant scheming British lab-geek. One joke, one note.

Chris Darke

Little Women

USA 1994

Director: Gillian Armstrong

Certificate
U
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Companies
Di Novi Pictures
Columbia Pictures Corporation
Producer
Denise DiNovi
Co-producer
Robin Swicord
Associate Producer
Warren Carr
Production Co-ordinator
Wendy Patricia Lewis
Unit Production Manager
Warren Carr
2nd Unit Production Manager
Joseph E. Foley
Location Manager
Rino Pace
2nd Unit:
Mark A. Dixon
Post-production Supervisor
Rosemary Dority
2nd Unit Director
Mark Lewis
Assistant Directors
Mark Turnbull
Kim Winther
Jim Brebner
Pete Whyte
John-Paul Holecka
Casting
Carrie Frazier
Shani Ginsberg
Canada:
Stuart Aikins
Screenplay
Robin Swicord
Based on the novel by
Louisa May Alcott
Script Supervisor
Christine Wilson
Director of Photography
Geoffrey Simpson
2nd Unit Director of Photography:
Peter Levy
Camera Operator
Randall Platt
Editor
Nicholas Beauman
Production Designer
Jan Roelfs
Art Director
Richard Hudolin
Set Design
Richard St. John
Harrison
Set Decorator
Jim Erickson
Scenic Artist
Barry Kootchin
Special Effects
William Orr
Costume Design
Colleen Atwood
Costume Supervisor
Vancouver:
Jennifer Grossman
Los Angeles:
Nancy McArdle
Costume Set Supervisor:
Deborah Douglas
Make-up
Naomi Donne
Jan Newman
Marilyn Carbone
Hairstylists
James D. Brown
Wigs:
Peter Owen
Title Design
Belinda Bennetts
Titles/Opticals
Roger Cowland
Music
Thomas Newman
Music Consultants
Bruce Johnson
Sharyl Churchill
Music Editor
Bill Bernstein

Songs/Music Extracts
"Leila! Dieu Puissant" from "The Pearl Fishers" by Georges Bizet, performed by Barbara Hendricks, John Aler, the Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse
Choreography
Trudi Forrest
Sound Design
Lee Smith
Dialogue Editors
Karin Whittington
Gary O'Grady
ADR Editors
Tim Jordan
John Penders
Sound Mixer
Eric Batut
Scoring Mixer
Shawn Murphy
Re-recording Mixers
Gethin Creagh
Martin Oswin
Phil Heywood
Sound Effects Editor
Peter Townend
Foley Artist
John Simpson
Animal Wrangler
Head:
John D. Scott
Jamie Payton
Animal Trainer:
Dawn Martin-Wiener

Cast
Winona Ryder
Jo March
Gabriel Byrne
Friedrich Bhaer
Trini Alvarado
Meg March
Samantha Mathis
Older Amy March
Kirsten Dunst
Younger Amy March
Claire Danes
Beth March
Christian Bale
Laurie
Eric Stoltz
John Brooke
John Neville
Mr Laurence
Mary Wickes
Aunt March
Susan Sarandon
Mrs March
Florence Paterson
Hannah
Robin Collins
Carriage Boy
Corrie Clark
Belle Gardiner
Rebecca Toolan
Mrs Gardiner
Curt Willington
Red Hatred Young Man
Billie Puffer
Louella Puffer
Naughty Girls
Janne Mortil
Sally Moffat
Sarah Strange
Ahnee Boyce
Sally's Friends
Michele Goodger
Hortense
Marco Roy
Mr Parker
A.J. Unger
Ned Moffat
Jamie Woods-Morris
Patricia Leith
Boston Matrons
Christine Lippa
Mrs Hummel
Kristina West
Nico Babuck
Jenna Percy
Hummel Children
Alan Robertson
Dr Bangs
Mar Andersons
Fred Vaughn

Cameron Labine
Averill
Matthew Walker
Mr March
Bethoe Shirkoff
Art Teacher
Marilyn Norry
Mrs Kirk
Andrea Libman
Kitty Kirk
Tegan Moss
Minnie Kirk
Janet Craig
Miss Norton
Beverley Elliott
Irish Maid
James Leard
Charles Baird
Office Workers
Jay Brazaun
Dashwood
Dimitri Goritsas
Bhaer's Student
Kate Robbins
Opera Singer 'Leila'

David Adams
Opera Singer 'Nadir'
Donal Logue
Jacob Mayer
Scott Bellis
John McCracken
John C. Shaw
Charles Botts
Irene Miscoico
French Maid
Peter Haworth
Male Secretary
Natalie & Kristy Friisdahl
Daisy
Bryan & Sean Finn
Demi

10,652 feet
118 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

Christmas Eve in mid-nineteenth century Concord, Massachusetts. In Orchard House, four teenage girls, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy, wait for their mother to come home from distributing food to the poor. Their father is away, fighting in the Civil War. The next morning, a modest Christmas feast awaits the genteelly poor household but instead the girls take their food to a starving German family. On the way, they see their neighbour, the grumpy Mr Laurence and his newly arrived grandson, Laurie. Later Laurie watches wistfully from his window and hears the girls play-acting together. At a dance, Jo stumbles into him and they become friends. Meg meets and falls for Laurie's tutor, John Brooke. After a night at the theatre with Laurie and John, Jo discovers that Amy, jealous at not being invited, has burnt the manuscript of a story she has been writing. She is furious with her little sister. Soon after, however, she rescues Amy from drowning and the two make it up.

A telegram brings news that Mr March is in a Washington hospital, wounded, and his wife decides to go to him. Rather than ask her sulky Great Aunt March, for whom she acts as a companion, for the train fare, Jo sells her long hair. While their mother is away, Jo then sells her first story to a newspaper but her joy is marred when Beth contracts scarlet fever. With her mother's return, Beth starts to recover, although she is left with a weak heart. The following Christmas, when Beth comes downstairs for the first time, Mr March arrives home. Four years later, Meg and John Brooke get married. Laurie declares his love for Jo. She refuses him, and he leaves for England, hurt and angry. Jo is miserable and goes to New York to be a governess in a boarding house. Amy, meanwhile, is taken to Europe by Aunt March. In Nice, she meets Laurie who now professes his love for her. Rebuffed, he goes back to England to prove himself worthy of her by working hard.

In New York, Jo meets Friedrich Bhaer, a German tutor. A romance develops between them, but when he is critical of her first novel, she is hurt. That day, she receives a letter from her mother, saying that Beth is very ill, and goes back home without saying goodbye to Friedrich. Soon after she reaches

home Beth dies. In her grief, Jo writes a novel based around her life with her sisters. Meg gives birth to twins and Laurie returns, bringing his new wife, Amy. Aunt March dies, leaving Jo her huge house. Her mother suggests she turn it into a school. One day, Jo comes home to find a package. It is a proof copy of her soon-to-be-published new novel, left for her by Friedrich. She finds him and begs to him to stay and teach at her school. Kissing her, he accepts the offer.

The fourth film version of Louisa May Alcott's novel (and its sequel, *Good Wives*) is oddly pitched. In some ways, it reruns the stuff of director Gillian Armstrong's debut film, *My Brilliant Career*, by making a broadly feminist drama out of a period piece. In others, it is imbued with what enough movies have caused us to define as decent, all-American family values and loving relationships in spite of hardship. For a cynical modern audience, that could be a little archaic.

After the prickly *The Last Days of Chez Nous*, Armstrong is also back in the mushier visual land of her third feature, *Mrs Soffell*. There is something unnerving about a family that cannot be shown without being bathed in a warm sepia glow, or without an orchestra of violins to back up their every emotional exchange. In a similar fashion, a film that spends so much time lingering on gorgeous New England scenery, whether crisp snow, red and golden autumns, or lush green summers, is trying very hard to get a message across about the essential goodness and innocence of the place. What is odd is that these are neither innocent nor good times. There is war, poverty and disease. Yet despite *Little Women's* apparent political intent, there is no irony here. Atrocities simply drop out of focus as soon as they have provided a gauzy backdrop to the goodness of the women in question.

There's no question where the gender emphasis lies: the film resolutely sticks with its little women. Although much is made of Mr March and his return, he barely opens his mouth during the whole film. John Brooke, rather



Mother machine: Susan Sarandon

admirably played by Eric Stoltz in the circumstances, is a duffer. Even Laurie is only really seen as a reflection of the women he loves: first Jo, then Amy.

Yet the film runs into problems because its women are so polarised that they never cease to be mere representations. Beth, for example, is the Victorian ideal: the shy, home-loving, angelic victim who talks and lives in greeting card clichés. At the other end of the spectrum, her "Marmee" is a maternal blue stocking. Susan Sarandon's Mrs March is much less sentimental than her literary counterpart, who is forever praising her dear husband for helping her become such a good person, but she is also less human. In the novel Mrs March admits to having to deal with anger and frustration. Here Mrs March is the ultimate earth mother, healing the sick, soothing the angry, and all the while spouting sensible feminist dictats to her daughters (women should be self-reliant, use their talents, not waste themselves simply on being decorative, and so on). It is upsetting to be irritated by an actress of Susan Sarandon's calibre, but that is the cumulative effect of this mother-machine.

As the most contemporary character, it is Jo with whom we are expected to be most in tune. Independent, gawky, tomboyish and rebellious, she finds it hard to fit in (and who wouldn't, surrounded by these paragons of perfection?). She is also always trying to please and can never understand why she cannot succeed. Winona Ryder runs around eagerly in a most unladylike fashion but - unlike Katharine Hepburn in the 1933 version, and even June Allyson 16 years later - she misses a vital ingredient. Her Jo is not wild and difficult and clumsy; she is doe-eyed and rather mournful, with a mother who can solve every problem for her. Ryder may have made her name playing mixed-up teenagers, but they were altogether of a more sophisticated bent than earnest Jo.

For just one moment, as Jo, talking to Friedrich about her parents' transcendental beliefs, comments ruefully on how hard it is to grow up as a flawed person with "perfect" parents, the film alights upon what might have been its true dramatic centre. But the moment passes and we are sucked instead into idealism: not just about the March family but now also through a conventional screen romance between two rather beautiful people many miles away from the novel's ungainly lovers. Following the pattern it has set throughout, the film brushes away conflict and, almost magically, puts pat harmony in its place.

Once upon a time, this was a sentimental but often charming story about four girls growing up at a point in history when ideas about 'womanliness' were starting to enter a difficult period of flux. Now it has become a film with a mixed message; one that is both simplified political dogma and bland, wholesome sentiment. The question is: why did they bother?

Amanda Lipman

Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle

USA 1994

Director: Alan Rudolph

Certificate
15
Distributor
Artificial Eye
Production Company
Miramax International
In association with
Fine Line Features
Executive Producers
Scott Bushnell
Ira Deutchman
Producer
Robert Altman
Co-producer
Allan Nicholls
Associate Producer
James McLindon
Production Co-ordinator
Anne Brosseau
Unit Production Manager
Irene Litinsky
Unit Manager
Estelle Lemieux
Location Manager
Michele St-Arnaud
Assistant Directors
Allan Nicholls
Buck Deachman
Leslie Grierson
Canadian Casting
Lucie Robitaille
Screenplay
Alan Rudolph
Randy Sue Coburn
Script Supervisor
Luca Koumelis
Director of Photography
Jan Kessler
Editor
Suzy Elmiger
Associate Editor
Dylan Tichenor
Production Designer
François Séguin
Art Director
James Fox
Art Department
Co-ordinator
Michelle Drolet
Set Decorator
Frances Calder
Set Dressers
Jean Bourret
Anne Galea
Model Makers
Denis Caspar
Speakeasy Murals:
Susan Scott
Special Effects
Jacques Godbout
Costume Design
John Hay
Renée April
Costume Co-ordinator
Blanche Boileau
Make-up
Key:
Micheline Trépanier
Nathalie Trépanier
Special Make-up Effects
Adrien Morot
Hairstylist
Réjean Goderre
Title Design
Balsmeyer & Everett
Music
Mark Isham
Music Arranger/
Orchestrator
Ken Kugler
Music Recorder/Mixer
Steven Krause
Supervising Music Editor
Steven Borne
Sound Supervisor
John Alberts
Sound Co-ordinator
Michele Wasserman
Dialogue Editors
Branka Mrkic
Jac Rubenstein
Foley Supervisor
Bruce Pross

Foley Editors
Frank Kern
Steven Visscher
Sound Mixer
Richard Nichol
Supervising Re-recording
Mixer
Mark Berger
Re-recording Mixer
Michael Semanick
Sound Effects Editor
John Salk
Foley Artist
Marko Costanzo

Cast
Jennifer Jason Leigh
Dorothy Parker
Campbell Scott
Robert Benchley
Matthew Broderick
Charles MacArthur
Andrew McCarthy
Eddie Parker
Tim McGowan
Alexander Woollcott
Nick Cassavetes
Robert Sherwood
Gary Basaraba
Heywood Broun
Jake Johannsen
John Peter Toohey
Chip Zien
Franklin P. Adams
Matt Malloy
Marc Connelly
Sam Roberts
Harold Ross
Martha Plimpton
Jane Grant
Jane Adams
Ruth Hale
David Thornton
George S. Kaufman
Loni Parker
Beatrice Kaufman
Rebecca Miller
Neysa McMein
David Gow
Donald Ogden Stewart
Gwyneth Paltrow
Paula Hunt
James LeGros
Deems Taylor
Heather Graham
Mary Kennedy Taylor
Amelia Campbell
Mary Brandon
Sherwood
Lili Taylor
Edna Ferber
Jennifer Beals
Gertrude Benchley
Gabriel Gascon
Georges Attends
Peter Gallagher
Alan Campbell
Jean-Michael Henry
Harpo Marx
Wallace Shawn
Horatio Byrd
Malcolm Gets
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Keith Carradine
Will Rogers
Stephen Baldwin
Roger Spalding
Peter Benchley
Frank Crowninshield
Mina Badie
Joanie Gerard
Jon Favreau
Elmer Rice
Randy Lowell
Alvan Barach

11,202 feet
124 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Anamorphic

Hollywood, 1937. Dorothy Parker and her second husband, Alan Campbell, with whom she has written *A Star is Born*, watch the film being made at Selznick Studios. Following a brief reunion with her old friend Robert Benchley, Parker recalls the days, in 1917, when they first worked together at *Vanity Fair*, recruited by editor Frank Crowninshield, who launched her as a drama critic.

Married to Edwin Pond Parker II, who returned as a drunk and a drug-addict from military service, Parker increasingly turns to the company of other New York critics and writers, who take to meeting daily at lunchtime at the Algonquin hotel. Headed by *New York Times* theatre critic Alexander Woollcott, these noisy gatherings provide the ideal stimulus for the sharply cynical shafts of humour for which she becomes quickly renowned.

Fired from *Vanity Fair*, Parker turns for sympathy to Robert Benchley who, despite having a family to support, promptly announces his resignation. The two share an office; he as a columnist for *Life* and *New York World*, she writing poems and short stories. The Algonquin lunches continue, and after a visit by famed entertainer Will Rogers, the hotel provides a special table for future meetings of the self-designated "Vicious Circle". At a festive Round Table cabaret Parker meets Chicago journalist Charles MacArthur and falls for him. A compulsive womaniser, he is soon unfaithful, and despairingly she attempts suicide. Benchley comes to her rescue and not for the first time they consider having an affair; instead, they decide to remain just good friends.

Inspired by the the Vicious Circle, Harold Ross launches *The New Yorker* in 1925; contributions from Parker are to appear for nearly 30 years. A collection of poems proves a best-seller, and her reputation grows, but her life remains unstable and unfulfilling. She marries Alan Campbell, 11 years her junior, suffers a miscarriage, and moves with him to Hollywood. In 1945, while Campbell is away at the War, news reaches her of Benchley's death from cirrhosis of the liver. She remembers one of the last Vicious Circle parties, at which Benchley was drunk and Parker was persuaded to visit a psychiatrist. In 1958, on her way to receive the Peabody Award for Achievement and Integrity, she stops off at a bar and distractedly answers the questions of an eager fan. She dies in 1967 at the age of 74.

In an interview that runs behind the final credits, Dorothy Parker admits to participating in the Spanish Civil War (reporting from Madrid in November, 1937), dismissing the Beat Generation (she was scathing about Kerouac), and whispers her preferred epitaph (something along the lines, perhaps, of her ironic *Tombstones in the Starlight* verses). It is clear then that there was considerably more to her than Alan Rudolph's film has had time to tell. Although the screenplay is admirably packed with information, it

is selective in emphasis. Dull and disconsolate scenes at the typewriter are sensibly excluded, but it is disappointing not to see more of Parker's film studio activities, while her co-authored play *The Ladies of the Corridor* ("the only thing I ever did that I was proud of") is firmly ignored.

Worse, in measuring the decline and fall of Dorothy Parker from the time of her affair with Charles MacArthur in the mid-20s, the film overlooks at least two vital perspectives. There is little hint of the shock-waves caused by her political views, damaging her Hollywood career to the extent that she was pronounced Communist by the Un-American Activities Committee in 1952. Instead, we are shown a promiscuous and alcoholic Parker, concerned more with dog food than civil rights. And in place of an authentic account of her stormy but remarkably durable marriage to the wealthy Alan Campbell (whom she divorced once and married twice), the Rudolph version puts Robert Benchley firmly at the centre of her world in a grandly unconsummated *folie à deux*.

It is the reluctance of this relationship to accept its own consequences that turns Parker's story into the stuff of Rudolph's dreams. If she had been played by Genevieve Bujold, (*Trouble in Mind*, *The Moderns*) the resemblance to Rudolph's archetypal woman might almost have been too obvious. Incarnated by a welter of women in *Welcome to LA* and by Geraldine Chaplin in *Remember My Name*, she's the one for whom the perfect love remains inspiringly just out of reach, a source both of satisfaction and of perplexity, leading to desperation. In Parker's case, the result is partly that somnambulistic (or inebriated) condition which has infected Rudolph's heroines since *Premontion* (1972) and partly an irresistible eloquence. Rudolph has always written good dialogue and here, legitimately plagiarising Parker, he has excelled himself.

A master of the social event, Rudolph reconstructs the Algonquin as he formerly constructed Paris for *The Moderns* - in a Montreal studio, with much the same vitality of costume and decor, footnoted by much the same weary

observation of parties that outlive their proper span and mornings after that last for days. The Round Table lunches are a fanfare of one-liners amid a hubbub of passing names elusively on the edge of distinction. They are filmed with exuberant swoops of the camera. The formal geometries of Rudolph's early films have been replaced by the mellow appreciation of furniture, an inclination to glide from one beautifully appointed room to another or to contemplate a lakeside garden party in a single leisurely revolve - all indolence and charm. As usual, the past is where the colour lies; for the present, which in *Mrs. Parker's case* seems to mean everything after the mid-30s, Rudolph shifts to a prosaic monochrome.

Augmenting Mark Isham's music, set in its accustomed introspective key, the film's soundtrack is punctuated by Parker's poems. Her unexpectedly vulnerable cadences, with their bitter punch rhymes ("And if that makes you happy, kid/You'll be the first it ever did") are less crowd pleasing than her more famous asides - "I never liked a man I didn't meet", "Don't look at me in that tone of voice", "A girl can get splinters sliding down a barrister" - but they remain her salvation. However sparsely we are informed about Parker's pursuit of the unsuitable, however fictional the unexplored romance with Benchley (who has in this elegant rendering by Campbell Scott, all the dash of another Errol Flynn), a portrait of a genuine loner emerges from this melancholy commentary.

Employing accents said to be accurate (although they sound at first like a W. C. Fields impersonation), Jennifer Jason Leigh constructs a jaded and terminally wounded Parker, as inexplicable now as she must have seemed in her time with her unsteady poise, pitiless self-appraisals, and strange miscellany of distraught hats. This formidable performance, as cunning and detailed as her contributions to *Rush* and *Miami Blues*, gives Rudolph's amiably fragmented, eavesdropping agenda more than a few useful hints of plausibility. For the real Dorothy Parker, nevertheless, a dose of *Constant Reader* remains the best recommendation.

Philip Strick



His mistress' voice: Jennifer Jason Leigh

Natural Born Killers

USA 1994

Director: Oliver Stone

Certificate

18

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros presents
In association with
Regency
Enterprises/Alcor
Films/J D productions
An Ixtlan/New Regency
production

Executive Producers

Arnon Milchan
Thom Mount

Producers

Jane Hamsher
Don Murphy
Clayton Townsend

Co-producer

Rand Vossler

Associate Producers

Risa Bramon Garcia
Richard Rutowski

Production Co-ordinator

Pamela Hochschartner

Unit Production Manager

Leeann Stonebreaker

Location Manager

Jacelyn J. Baker

Post-production Supervisor

Bill Brown

2nd Unit Director

Philip Pfeiffer

Assistant Directors

Herb Gains
Noga Isackson
Scott Senecal
David Venghaus Jr

Casting

Risa Bramon Garcia
Billy Hopkins
Heidi Levitt

Associate:

Mary Vernieu
Suzanne Smith
Southwest:
Sally Jackson
Chicago:
Jane Alderman

Screenplay

David Veloz
Richard Rutowski
Oliver Stone

Story

Quentin Tarantino

Script Supervisors

Barbara Stioia
Deirdre Horgan

Director of Photography

Robert Richardson

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Rebecca Marie

Producer:

Daniel Chuba

Optical Effects Co-ordinator

Alex Olivares

Animation

Colossal Pictures

Animators:

Wendy Rogers
Cathy Wagner

Designer:

Mike Smith

Producers:

Paul Golden
Richard Quan

Editors

Hank Corwin
Brian Berdan

Production Designer

Victor Kempster

Supervising Art Director

Alan R. Tomkins

Art Director

Margery Zweig

Set Design

John Perry Goldsmith
Stella Furner

Set Decorator

Meredith Boswell

Scenic Artist

Dale Haugo

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Matt Sweeney

Special Effects

Bob Stoker
Larry L. Fuentes

Steve Luport

Frank L. Pope

Jim Schwalm

Lucinda Strub

Costume Design

Richard Hornung

Costume Supervisor

Michelle Kurpaska

Make-up

Key:

Matthew W. Mungle

John E. Jackson

Special Make-up Effects

Matthew W. Mungle

Gordon J. Smith

Hairstylists

Cydney Cornell

Melissa Yenkey

Title Design

Pacific Title

Executive Music Producer

Budd Carr

Music Producer

Trent Reznor

Associate Music Supervisor

Sylvia Nestor

Music Editors

Alex Gibson

Carlton Kaller

Songs/Music Extracts

"Waiting For the

Miracle" by Leonard

Cohen, Sharon

Robinson, "Anthem",

"The Future" by and

performed by Leonard

Cohen; "Now" by and

performed by Chris

McGregor; "The Way

I Walk" by Jack Scott,

performed by Robert

Gordon; "Noah Hutton

Bug Spray" by Otis

Conner; "Shitlist"

by Donita Sparks,

performed by L7;

"Control Room",

"Snake Field", "Love

to Hank", "Shower",

"Wild Drone", "Mallory

Cello", "Interview" by

and performed by

tomandandy; "Moon

Over Greene County"

by and performed by

Dan Zanes; "La Vie en

rose" by Mack David,

Edith Piaf, Louiguy,

performed by Victor

Young and His Singing

Strings; "Black Strait

Jacket" by Elmer

Bernstein; "Leader

of the Pack" by George

Morton, Jeff Barry,

Ellie Greenwich,

performed by The

Shangri-las; "Rebel-

Rouser" by Duane

Eddy, Lee Hazlewood,

performed by Duane

Eddy; "Rock & Roll

Nigger" by Patti Smith,

Lenny Kaye, performed

by Patti Smith; "Me

and Her Outside" by

and performed by

Steven Jesse Bernstein;

"Sweet Jane" by Lou

Reed. "If You Were the

Woman and I Was the

Man" by Michael

Timmins, performed

by Cowboy Junkies;

"Wild Plate Rubs" by

and performed by Scott

Grusin; "You Belong

to Me" by Pee Wee

King, Redd Stewart,

Chilton Price,

performed by Bob Dylan; "The Trembler" by Duane Eddy, Ravi Shanker, "Shazam!" by Duane Eddy, Lee Hazlewood, performed by Duane Eddy; "Cartoonicide", "B Swell" by Richard Gibbs; "Kipenda Roho" by Remmy Ongala, performed by Remmy Ongala & Orchestre Super Matimila; "Back in Baby's Arms" by Bob Montgomery, performed by Patsy Cline; "Taboo" by and performed by Peter Gabriel, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan; "Ted Just Admit It" by and performed by Jane's Addiction; "I Put a Spell on You" by Jay Hawkins, performed by Diamanda Galas; "History (Repeats Itself)" by T. Wilbrandt, K. Buhlert, F. Lovsky, performed by A.O.S.; "Something I Can Never Have", "A Warm Place" by Trent Reznor, performed by Nine Inch Nails; "I Will Take You Home" by and performed by Russell Means; "Drums Ago-go" by Paul Buff, performed by The Hollywood Persuaders; "On the Wrong Side of Relaxation", "Under Wraps" by and performed by Barry Adamson; "The Heat", "In Doubt" by and performed by Peter Gabriel; "Reed My Lips" by Brent Lewis, performed by Brent Lewis, Richard Hardy; "Earth" by and performed by Peter Kater, R. Carlos Nakai; "These Boots Are Made For Walking" by Lee Hazlewood, "Born Bad" by Cissie Cobb, performed by Juliette Lewis; "Checkpoint Charlie", "The Violation of Expectation" by and performed by Barry Adamson; "Judgement Day", "Vena Cava" by Diamanda Galas, "The Lord is My Shepherd", performed by Diamanda Galas; "The Day the Niggaz Took Over" by Dr. Dre, Snoop, Daz, Toni C., RBX, performed by Dr. Dre; "Ghost Town" by J. Dammers, performed by The Specials; "The Hay Wain" by Sergio Cervetti; "The In Crowd" by Billy Page, performed by The Ramsey Lewis Trio; "Doom Tac A Doom" by and performed by Brent Lewis; "Spread Eagle Beagle" by Roger Osbourne, performed by Melvins; "Cyclops" by and performed by Marilyn Manson; "Forkboy" by Jello Biafra, Paul Barker, Al Jourgensen, Jeff Ward, Bill Rieflin, performed by Lard; "Bombtrack", "Take the Power Back" by Zack de la Rocha, Rage Against the Machine, performed by Rage Against the Machine; "Fun" by Mona Elliott, Marc Orleans, Ayal Noar, Christian Negrete, performed by Spore; "Allah, Mohammed,

Char, Yaar" by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, performed by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Qawwal and Party; "Nusrat 1083/Nusrat" by and performed by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan; "Overlay" by David Bridie, John Phillips, Rowan McKinnon, Russel Bradley, James Southall, Tim Cole, performed by Not Drowning, Waving; "Sobama Moon" by Leonard Eto, performed by Kodo; "Wozzeck" by Alban Berg, performed by Paris National Opera Orchestra and Chorus, Pierre Boulez, Walter Berry, Isabel Strauss; "Madame Butterfly" by Giacomo Puccini, performed by The Sofia National Opera Chorus and Orchestra; "Carmina Burana", by Carl Orff, performed by Prague Festival Orchestra and Chorus; "A Night on the Bare Mountain" by Modest Mussorgsky, performed by Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra, J. Sander **Utility Sound** Kevin E. Patterson **Supervising Sound Editors** Michael Wilhoit **Dialogue** Dan Rich **Sound Editors** Jeff Watts **Robert Batha** Dubbing: Kelly Oxford **Supervising ADR** Gregg Baxter **ADR Editors** Joe Mayer **Bill Voigtlander** **Foley Editor** Craig Jaeger **Sound Mixer** David MacMillan **ADR Mixer** Charleen Richards **Foley Mixer** Jim Ashwill **Sound Re-recorders** Tom Fleischman **Michael Minkler** **Christian Minkler** **Sound Effects Editors** Randy Kelley **Mark A. Lanza** **Joseph Phillips** **Peter J. Lehman** **Foley Artists** Gary "Wrecker" Hecker **Dan O'Connell** **John Cucci** **Technical Advisers** Captain Dale Dye **Warriors, Inc.** **Stunt Co-ordinator** Phil Neilson **Film Extracts** *Frankenstein* (1931) *The Wild Bunch* (1969) *Midnight Express* (1978) *Scarface* (1983)

Cast **Woody Harrelson** Mickey Knox **Juliette Lewis** Mallory Knox **Robert Downey Jr** Wayne Gale **Tommy Lee Jones** Dwight McCluskey **O-Lan Jones** Mabel **Ed White** Pinball Cowboy **Richard Lineback** Sonny **Lanny Flaherty** Earl

Carol-Renee Modrail Short Order Cook **Rodney Dangerfield** Mallory's Dad **Edie McClurg** Mallory's Mom **Sean Stone** Kevin **Jerry Gardner** **Jack Caffrey** **Leon Skyhorse Thomas** Work Bosses **Corey Everson** TV Mallory **Dale Dye** Dale Wrigley **Eddy "Boogie" Conna** Gerald Nash **Evander Handler** David **Kirk Baltz** Roger **Terrylene** Julie **Maria Pitillo** Deborah **Josh Richman** Soundman **Matthew Faber** **Jamie Herrold** **Jake Beecham** Kids **Saemi Nakamura** **Seiko Yoshida** Japanese Kids **Jared Harris** London Boy **Katherine McQueen** London Girl **Salvator Xuereb** **Emanuel Xuereb** French Boys **Natalie Karp** French Girl **Jessie Rutkowski** Young Girl **Sally Jackson** Mickey's Mom **Phil Neilson** Mickey's Dad **Brian Barker** Young Mickey **Corinna Laszlo** Emily

Balthazar Getty Gas Station Attendant **Tom Sizemore** Jack Scagnetti **Red West** Cowboy Sheriff **Gerry Runnels** Indian Cop **Jeremiah Bitsui** Young Indian Boy **Russell Means** Old Indian **Lorraine Ferris** Pinky **Glen Chin** Druggist **Saemi Nakamura** Japanese Reporter **Puritt Taylor Vince** Kavanaugh **Everett Quinton** Wurliwurt **Steven Wright** Dr Emil Reingold **Peter Crombie** Intense Cop **John M. Watson Snr** Black Inmate **Joe Grifasi** Duncan Homolka **Bouglas Crosby** **Carl Clarfallo** Mallory's Guards **Marshall Bell** Deputy **Melinda Rema** Antonia Chavez **Jim Carrane** Smithy **Bob Swan** Napalotoni **Louis Lombardi** Sparky **Robert Jordan** WGN Newscaster

10,690 feet
119 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour/Prints by Technicolor

In a diner somewhere in the mid-west, a young girl begins dancing while her boyfriend orders food. Three roughnecks assume she's easy bait and begin to taunt her. Immediately she and her boyfriend produce firearms and begin slaughtering everyone, leaving only one witness to tell the tale. The pair are Mickey and Mallory and they're on a killing spree. A backstory in the form of a spoof television sitcom entitled *I Love Mallory* sketches out how Mallory was prey to an abusive and violent father and how she and Mickey killed her entire family.

On a high bridge over a deep gorge, the two clasp slashed hands in a blood bond. Their instant media history is then encapsulated by the television show *American Maniacs*, hosted by Australian Wayne Gayle. They are celebrity killers. As they drive along, Mickey suggests several passing candidates to take as hostage. Irritated that they're all women, Mallory leaves Mickey stranded, driving to a garage where she seduces a mechanic on the bonnet of her car before shooting him for giving "the worst head I ever had".

Together again, Mickey and Mallory run out of gas in the middle of the desert. An old Indian mystic gives them shelter in his hut. He seems to have some understanding and sympathy for them, but that night Mickey has a nightmare and shoots the Indian dead by mistake. Surrounded by deadly con-jured snakes, the two both get bitten

before making their getaway. They go to collect an antidote from a store, but the alarm is raised and the building surrounded. Hard-nosed detective Jack Scagnetti is soon on the scene to arrest them, hoping to consummate a perverse passion for Mallory.

A year later, Scagnetti is called in by the warden to deliberately assassinate Mickey and Mallory in prison. On Superbowl Sunday, Mickey gives an in-depth interview to Gayle and his *American Maniacs* crew. His unapologetic admission that he's a "natural born killer" sparks an instant riot among the watching inmates. While his guards are distracted by the noise, Mickey grabs a shotgun and kills several of them before leading a procession of hostages through the prison to Mallory's cell. There he finds Scagnetti trying to assault her. Mickey shoots him dead and fights his way out, via the front gate, encouraging a frenzied Gayle to join in the killing. In a clearing in the woods, the couple explain to Gayle that he must die and together they execute him before his own camera. A flash-forward shows Mickey and Mallory living in a mobile home as a nuclear family.

After the much-discussed delay to its classification by the BBFC, what's most surprising about *Natural Born Killers* is not the visceral depiction of violent acts, but that anyone could have accepted Oliver Stone's putative satire as a serious work. Not only is the film played for grim laughs throughout (albeit by a director who is clearly not laughing), with Mickey and Mallory as overblown cartoon killers, but its black humour is so strained and hysterical that all satirical intent is dissipated. There's barely a trace left of Tarantino's usual cool wit (assuming it was there in the original script), no nice domestic touches to offset the mayhem; it's a straightforward rush of inexplicably raw visual data.

Stone's proclaimed target is the pernicious levelling effect of media saturation on moral questions, but if this full-on assault of MTV blip-editing and simulated channel-surfing hits any target at all, it would be the barn door marked 'overused imagery'. For all the hallucinogenic frenzy with which this film shuffles the full range of image-gathering options, it is a curiously second-hand experience. Its pictorial exuberance feels forced, a slap-dash imitation of music video and infotainment style. In attempting a self-lacerating version of Terrence Malick's *Badlands* and the tinpot imitations that have followed that film in mythologising 'mis-understood' hoodlum youth, Stone is clearly so afraid that his audience won't get the fact that he's engaged in parody, that he restates everything over and over, repeatedly cutting from wielded gun, to reacting victim, to entry wound, to gun again. But he also sends himself up, having Mallory rant at Mickey for killing the Indian: "Bad, bad, bad, bad, bad", as if she were giving notes on his performance.

Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis

are nevertheless superb at exaggerating the archetypes of cool psychopathology forged around the mean and moody stars of the 50s and 60s. Harrelson's cocky smirk makes a particularly apt counterpart to Lewis's method pout (she could have parodied her own performance in *Kalifornia*; instead she plays a more decisive and self-possessed version of white trash womanhood). There are blink-and-miss-'em knowing allusions to films as diverse as *Detour* and *Scorpio Rising*, which can be seen as progenitors of the standard weirdness-is-all music video approach. But while it's undoubtedly true that the image bank of rebel youth mythology – of Dean, Presley, Brando *et al* – has been plundered to bankruptcy by the endless recycling of the music promo business, it didn't need a scion of the 60s such as Stone – whose own movie, *The Doors*, is similarly meretricious – to spend millions of dollars bemoaning it. To call it overkill would be an understatement.

What is unique and remarkable, however, is for a big budget Hollywood movie deliberately to trash its narrative in favour of a nightmare logic. Perhaps Stone has no interest in telling more than a vestigial story because it's harder with narrative to predict an audience's reaction. He wants us to feel nothing but his own palpable disgust at the kind of true-crime cultural production spoofed as *American Maniacs*. But what he is holding up is a fairground's distorting mirror, to which we can only respond with a laugh or a shrug.

Of course, it will be argued that one-note-harping on one-note-harping is the whole point, that, whether or not you get the insider references, you will get the message. But Stone fails to follow his own logic. If an audience is sophisticated enough to read the stream of images then surely they deserve a coherent argument. Here the audience gets a deafening imprecation to think about every little thing from a director who seems to feel that they've already lost the ability to do so.

There might be another reason for Stone's abandoning the coherent narrative. Perhaps the least-discussed of recent new technologies is the computer-based editing systems, such as Avid and Lightworks, which enable a film to be edited digitally at speed in many different versions. Without this facility, *Natural Born Killers* would be almost unthinkable, not simply because otherwise the process of assembling such a random mass of footage would take too long, but also because linear hands-on editing arguably forces the film-maker to think the whole thing through, to keep the entire film in his or her head. No-one could possibly retain a complete and detailed picture of this film because it is so non-committal and open-ended.

As for the film's much-trumpeted ability to shock, it is set at the level of a prank, reminiscent of nothing so much as a heavy metal band adding a backwards voice track to an album simply to wind up Christian fundamentalists.

Nick James

Nell

USA 1994

Director: Michael Apted

Certificate
12

Distributor
Polygram Filmed Entertainment

Production Company
Egg Pictures
Polygram Filmed Entertainment
Lost Pond Enterprises

Producers
Jodie Foster
Renée Missel

Co-producer
Graham Place

Production Supervisor
Pamela Hochschartner

Production Co-ordinator
Angela Quiles

Unit Production Manager
Graham Place

Location Manager
Scott Elias

Assistant Directors
David Sardi
Marty Mericka
Tichard Brodsky
Jill Maxcy

Casting
Linda Lory

Voice:
Barbara Harris

Screenplay
William Nicholson
Mark Handley
Based on the play 'Idioglossia' by Mark Handley

Script Supervisor
Dianne Dreyer

Director of Photography
Dante Spinotti

Camera Operator
Gary Jay

Steadicam Operators
Kyle Rudolph
Bob Gorelick

Editor
Jim Clark

Production Designer
Jon Hutman

Art Director
Tim Galvin

Set Decorator
Samara Hutman

Set Dressers
Lisa K. Sessions
John T. Bromell
Michael Shapiro
Drew Sywanyk

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Bob Vasquez

Costume Design
Susan Lyall

Costume Supervisor
Laura Goldsmith

Make-up
Key:
Jean A. Black
Jaren Millard

Hair stylist
Key:
Frances Mathias
Rita Troy

Music
Mark Isham
Additional Music:
Phil Marshall

Music Conductor/Orchestrator
Ken Krugler

Music Editor
Tom Carlson

Choreography
Susan Bonawitz-Collard

Supervising Sound Editor
Eddy Joseph

Dialogue Editor
Nigel Mills

ADR Editor
Renée Tondelli

Foley Editor
Bob Risk

Foley Mixer
John Bateman

Sound Mixer
Chris Newman

Music Recorder/Mixer
Stephen Krause

Re-recording Mixers
Dean Humphreys
Tim Cavagin

Foley Artists
Dianne Greaves
Jack Stew

Technical Adviser
James S. Grotstein

Stunt Co-ordinators
Jerry Hewitt
Danny Aiello

Cast
Jodie Foster
Nell
Liam Neeson
Jerome Lovell
Natasha Richardson
Paula Olsen
Richard Libertini
Alexander Paley
Nick Searcy
Todd Peterson
Robin Mullins
Mary Peterson
Jeremy Davies
Billy Fisher
O'Neal Compton
Don Fontana
Heather M. Bomba
E. Bomba
The Twins
Sean Bridgers
Mike Ibarra
Joe Inosce
Judge
Stephanie Dawn Wood
Ruthie Lowell
Mary Lynn Riner
Janet Baring
Lucille McIntyre
Sally
Al Wiggins
Harry Goppel
Beth Bostic
Jean Malinowski
Rob Buren III
Stevie
Chris T. Hill
Jed
Tim Mehaffey
Shane
Dana Stevens
Rachel Weiss
Nicole Adair
Autistic Child
Robin Rochelle
Teacher
Susan Correll Hickerson
Administrator
Marlon Jackson
Male Nurse
Danny Millsaps
Deputy

10,126 feet
113 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

explores, he is startled by a creature who springs from the rafters, wailing and screaming in an incomprehensible language. The young woman violently ejects the two shaken men; but Jerry finds a note in an old family Bible: "The Lord led you here, stranger. Guard my Nell."

Speculating that Nell's sole human contact must have been with her mother and that her strange language may be derived from her mother's stroke-affected speech, Jerry invites an ambitious city psychologist, Paula Olsen, to examine his discovery. Surprisingly observing Nell's childlike rituals, he soon regrets involving Paula, who applies to have Nell committed. Jerry fights her, and the judge agrees to defer a decision for three months until Nell's behaviour has been more thoroughly studied. Jerry and Paula establish their respective observation bases and pursue different methods; while Jerry learns to imitate Nell's language, Paula is unable to reach a conclusive diagnosis.

One night, they see Nell naked on a rock in the lake, seemingly absorbed in a private ritual with another invisible person. When Nell explains one of her words, "eva'dur" – meaning both evil-doer and man – to Jerry by miming a stabbing movement towards her belly, he concludes that she has an irrational fear of rape. At Paula's suggestion, he shows Nell his naked body, but she responds with neither sexual interest nor unease. One day Nell leads them to a small skeleton sheltered in the woods. They realise that Nell had a twin, May, who died as a child and guess that the pair spoke their own private language.

Attracted to Jerry but increasingly excluded by the bond between him and Nell, Paula taunts him that he is only interested in Nell because she is not a threat to his bachelor lifestyle. They drive Nell into town. Although overwhelmed, she forms an instant, uncanny empathy with Peterson's mentally distressed wife Mary. Nell then wanders into a bar where salacious youths persuade her to expose her breasts, until Jerry angrily bursts in and saves her.

After discreet facilitation by Nell, Jerry and Paul spend their first night together. A story about the "wild woman of the woods" breaks as front-page news. The city mental hospital is now the only place where Nell can be safe. She is utterly traumatised and if she does not improve in time for the court hearing she will be institutionalised. Jerry snatches her away to a motel. His pain melts the frozen emotions between him and Paula. Seeing their embrace Nell shows signs of recovery. In court, Nell asks Jerry to act as her interpreter and speaks for herself. Five years later, the Jerry and Paula – now married with a young daughter – drive out to Nell's cabin, where she is surrounded by friends, to celebrate her birthday.

Speculation that Nell could cull Jodie Foster a third Best Actress



Back to basics: Jodie Foster

Oscar has already generated cynicism among critics on both sides of the Atlantic, one even suggesting that the prospect was the only plausible motive for her production company Big Egg Pictures picking this backwoods moral tale as its first movie. Perhaps it's *Piano* envy: as *US Premiere* explained recently, "being mute won an Oscar for Holly Hunter, so there's no telling what speaking gibberish will do for Jodie Foster." Or perhaps it's just unfortunate that Nell comes so close on the heels of *Forrest Gump* – another back-to-basics fable whose bottom line is the triumph of homespun innocence over post-60s values. Though its intelligent liberal surface might seem some distance from *Gump*'s simple-minded homilies, Nell shares more of the latter's reactionary nostalgia than its makers might like to think.

Nell often looks and feels less like a movie than a showcase for a star turn. In contrast with Ada in *The Piano*, whose gestures and facial expressions surpass speech in their defiant eloquence, Nell's physical and facial language is intentionally unreadable, in keeping with her total isolation from modern society. But it is difficult to believe in that isolation when Foster gesticulates around her lakeside cabin as if she were a one woman contemporary dance class and when her painstakingly faded print frocks look like grunge chic leftovers. As her supposedly incomprehensible private language sounds very like a heavily distorted Southern drawl, it's no surprise when Neeson laboriously realises that that's more or less what it is.

From *Rain Man* to *Awakenings*, the notion that the mentally 'challenged' have in fact been blessed with a special gift has found increasing popularity in Hollywood. The most pertinent question about this trend is not whether such movies are producing positive images, but exactly whose needs these images are serving. For all its liberal noises about Nell's vulnerability to exploitation and abuse at the hands of 'civilisation', Nell is not really interested in its protagonist's subjective

experience. The film does not require us even to begin imagining what it would mean to live like her, but merely to echo Jerry's response to his first sight of her cabin: "Wow! Is this for real?"

A recurring theme in several recent idiot-savant films is that the challenged-but-gifted character becomes a valid member of society not in their own right but because of their value to other (less gifted) people. In *Rain Man*, this value was literally monetary: yuppie Tom Cruise's reward for learning to love his autistic brother Dustin Hoffman instead of fleeing him of his \$3 million inheritance was to gain a share of the cash. Here, Nell's right to autonomy is demonstrated entirely in terms of her value as a catalyst through whom Jerry and Paula learn about themselves.

It says plenty about the film's essential conservatism and aversion to risk that the possibility of sexual attraction between Nell and Jerry is never seriously entertained. The casting of real-life twosome Neeson and Richardson underlines the tacit assumption that Nell cannot really be a sexual contender – more so when, conveniently, Nell starts relating to the pair as if they were her parents. In this context, Paula's shows of jealousy over Jerry's fascination with Nell are merely a function of her own unadmitted desire, while Nell's joy as she gambols naked in the lake is passed off as sexless and childlike.

More insidiously, Nell's innocence functions as a benchmark of nostalgia against which urban life, psychiatry, the uncertainties of 90s relationships – and seemingly even feminism – are rounded up and denounced. You don't need to wait for her to narrowly escape rape by teenage rednecks (in a pool bar setting that toys distastefully with memories of Foster's performance in *The Accused*) to figure that the world beyond the backwoods is a menacing place; its sledgehammer visual imagery – idyllic, over-leisurely sequences of dense woodland and misty, mystical lakes edited against intimidating urban freeways and mirror-glass skyscrapers – has already done the job within minutes of the opening credits.

The connection between this backward-looking ruralism and an equally regressive take on gender roles is made clear in the film's treatment of Paula, in whom bad female ambition and bad urban values are explicitly linked. While Jerry observes Nell from a self-built hide in the woods, unreconstructed career-woman Paula spies on her via close-circuit television from a luxury houseboat and records her observations into a dictaphone. Jerry's reaction to the news that she plans to stay for three months – "Don't you have a life?" – is a surefire insinuation that a career and emotional fulfilment don't mix. It's no surprise then, that Paula ends up shackled up in the country with Jerry, an estate car and a toddler. In keeping with this film's considerable limitations, the exact nature of Nell's fulfilment is harder to gauge.

Claire Monk

Jerry Lovell, a doctor working in smalltown North Carolina, is called out by Sheriff Todd Peterson to an isolated lakeside cabin where an old woman has died. Jerry is fascinated to find evidence of a life untouched by twentieth century developments. As he

Pret-a-Porter (Ready to Wear)

USA 1994

Director: Robert Altman

Certificate

15
Distributor
 Buena Vista
Production Company
 Miramax Film
 International
Executive Producers
 Bob Weinstein
 Harvey Weinstein
 Jan Jessel
 Moscow:
 Angelo Pastore
Producer
 Robert Altman
Co-producers
 Scott Bushnell
 Jon Kilik
Associate Producer
 Brian D. Leitch
Production Co-ordinator
 Agnes Bermejo
Production Manager
 Daniel W. Hermann
Location Manager
 Eric Muller
2nd Unit Film/TV Director
 Allan Nicholls
TV Associate
 Dylan Tichnor
Assistant Directors
 Jerome Enrico
 Philippe Landoulsi
 Olivier Greco
 Emmanuel Hamon
 Jean-Marc Joly
Casting
 France:
 Guylène Pean
Screenplay
 Robert Altman
 Barbara Shulgasser
Script Supervisor
 Carmen Soriano
Directors of Photography
 Pierre Mignot
 Jean Lépine
Editor
 Geraldine Peroni
Film:
 Suzy Elmiger
Production Designer
 Stephen Altman
Creative Consultant
 Nathalie Rykiel
Art Director
 William Amello
Set Design
 Jean Canovas
Set Decorator
 Françoise Dupertuis
Set Dresser
 David Roman
Costume Design
 Catherine Leterrier
 Simone Lo's Collection:
 Cerruti 1881
 Cy Bianco's Collection:
 Xuly Bet
 Cort Romney's
 Collection:
 Vivienne Westwood
 Lammeraux Boots:
 Larry Mahan
 Western Boots
Featured Collections
 Jean-Paul Gaultier
 Issey Miyake
 Christian Lacroix
 Sonia Rykiel
 Gianfranco Ferré for
 Christian Dior
Wardrobe Supervisor
 Olivier Beriot
Fashion Co-ordinator
 Christine Jolimoy
Key Make-up
 Judith Gayo
 Jacques Clemente
Key Hairstylist
 Paul de Fisser
Title Design
 Balsmeyer & Everett
 Computer Graphics:
 Syzyg Digital Cinema

Music/Music Conductor

Michel Legrand
Music Supervisor
 Allan Nicholls
Music Editor
 Suzana Peric
Music Consultant
 Happy Walters
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Here Comes the
 Hotstepper" by Ini
 Kamozé, Salaam
 Gibbs, Chris Kenner,
 performed by Ini
 Kamozé; "Here We
 Come" by Cheryl James,
 Maurice Scott, Richard
 Evans, Harry Pepper,
 John Watt, Al Cooper,
 Harold Clayton, Sigidi,
 performed by Salt 'N
 Pepa; "70's Love
 Groove" by Janet
 Jackson, James Harris
 III, Terry Lewis,
 performed by Janet
 Jackson; "These Boots
 Are Made for Walking"
 by Lee Hazlewood,
 performed by Sam
 Phillips; "Martha" by
 and performed by Eric
 Mouquet, Michel
 Sanchez; "Keep Givin'
 Me Your Love" by
 Steven Nikolas,
 Brendan Sibley,
 Kenneth Karlin, Soul,
 Shock & Cutfather,
 performed by Cece
 Peniston; "Supermodel
 Sandwich" by and
 performed by Terence
 Trent D'Arby; "Style is
 Coming Back in Style"
 by Jerry Leiber, Mike
 Stoller, performed by
 John Pizzarelli; "I'm
 Too Sexy" by Fred
 Fairbrass, Richard
 Fairbrass, Rob Manzoli,
 performed by Right
 Said Fred; "My Girl
 Josephine" by Antoine
 Fats' Domino, Dave
 Bartholomew,
 performed by Supercat;
 "Natural Thing" by Paul
 Heard, Mike Pickering,
 performed by M People;
 "Jump on Top of Me" by
 Mick Jagger, Keith
 Richards, performed by
 The Rolling Stones;
 "Pretty" by Dolores
 O'Riordan, Noel Hogan,
 performed by The
 Cranberries; "Close to
 You" by
 N'Dea Davenport,
 Jan Kincaid, Simon
 Bartholomew, Andrew
 Levy, performed by
 The Brand New Heavies;
 "Get Wild" by The New
 Power Generation,
 performed by NPG;
 "Lemon" by Paul
 Hewson, Dave Evans,
 Larry Mullen, Adam
 Clayton, performed by
 U2; "I Like Your Style"
 by Emilio Castillo,
 Stephen Kupka, Nick
 Milo, performed by
 Tower of Power; "I Got
 the Bull by the Horns"
 by Amos Boyd, Billie
 Jean Horton, performed
 by k.d. lang; "Dopest
 Ethiopian" by Wil
 Townsend, Warren
 Robinson, Andre
 Zachary, Pharaoh Davis,
 Tony Perez, Kevin

Perez, performed by
 Asante; "Ruby Baby" by
 Jerry Leiber, Mike
 Stoller, performed by
 Björk Gudmundsdóttir
 & The Gudmundur
 Ingólfsson Trio; "Be
 Thankful for What You
 Got" by and performed
 by William DeVaughn;
 "Addicted to Love" by
 and performed by
 Robert Palmer;
 "Unchained Melody"
 by Hy Zaret, Alex North,
 performed by the
 Righteous Brothers;
 "Blackjack" by
 Donaldson Byrd,
 performed by Donald
 Byrd; "As" by John
 Custer, Brian Dennis,
 performed by Dag;
 "Abat-jour" by Robert
 Stolz, performed by
 Henry Wright; "Twiggy,
 Twiggy" by Lalo
 Schiffrin, Mort Stevens,
 Burt Bacharach, Hal
 David, Nanako Sato,
 performed by Pizzicato
 5; "Raga" by John
 Wardle, Najma Akhtar,
 Jacki Leibezeit,
 performed by Jah
 Wobble; "How Long
 Dub" by Beresford
 Romeo, Philip Harvey,
 performed by Soul II
 Soul; "Reste sur Moi"
 by M. Lavigne, P. Grillet,
 F. Aboulker, performed
 by Patricia Kaas; "Third
 Time Lucky" by Basia
 Trzecieleska, Danny
 White, performed by
 Basia; "Same Brown
 Earth" by David
 Hidalgo, Louis Perez,
 performed by Latin
 Players; "Violent and
 Funky" by Mike Muir,
 Adam Siegel, Robert
 Trujillo, Dean
 Pleasants, performed by
 Infectious Grooves;
 "Swamp Thing" by
 Richard Norris, David
 James Ball, performed
 by The Grid;
 "L'Accordéoniste" by
 Michel Emer, "La
 Coulante du pauvre
 Jean" by Marguerite
 Monnot, Rene Rouzard,
 performed by Edith
 Piaf; "Transit Ride" by
 Keith Elam, performed
 by Guru; "Here We Go"
 by Stakka Bo, Jonas von
 der Burg, performed by
 Stakka Bo; "La Vie en
 rose" by Louiguy, Edith
 Piaf, Mack David,
 performed by Grace
 Jones; "Concerto for
 Trumpet and Strings"
 by Giuseppe Torelli;
 "Duet, Act 2 Bacarolle"
 by Jacques Offenbach,
 performed by Amy
 Albani; "The Pirates of
 Penzance" by Gilbert &
 Sullivan, performed by
 The D'Oyle Carte Opera
 Company
Supervising Sound Editor
 Skip Lievsay
Dialogue Supervisor
 Philip Stockton
Dialogue Editors
 Eliza Paley
 Fred Rosenberg
Foley Supervisor
 Bruce Pross
Foley Editors
 Frank Kern
 Steve Visscher
Production Sound Mixer
 Alain Curvelier
Sound Re-recording Mixer
 Lee Dichter
Sound Effects Editor
 Eugene Gearty
Foley Artists
 Marko Costanza
Cast
 Danny Aiello

Major Hamilton
 Anouk Aimée
 Simone Lowenthal
 Lauren Bacall
 Slim Chrysler
 Kim Basinger
 Kitty Potter
 Michel Blanc
 Inspector Forget
 Anne Canovas
 Violetta Romney
 Jean-Pierre Cassel
 Olivier de la Fontaine
 François Cluzet
 Jean-Pierre
 Rosy de Palma
 Pilar
 Rupert Everett
 Jack Lowenthal
 Kasia Figura
 Vivienne
 Teri Garr
 Louise Hamilton
 Richard E. Grant
 Cort Romney
 Linda Hunt
 Regina Krumm
 Sally Kellerman
 Sissy Wanamaker
 Ute Lemper
 Albertine
 Tara Léon
 Kiki Simpson
 Sophia Loren
 Isabella de la Fontaine
 Lyle Lovett
 Clint Lammaraux
 Chiara Mastroianni
 Sophie Choset
 Marcello Mastroianni
 Sergei (Sergio)
 Tom Novembre
 Reggie
 Stephen Rea
 Milo O'Brannigan
 Sam Roberts
 Craig
 Tim Robbins
 Joe Flynn
 Georganna Robertson
 Dane Simpson
 Julia Roberts
 Anne Eisenhower
 Jean Rochefort
 Inspector Tantpis
 Lili Taylor
 Fiona Ulrich
 Tracey Ullman
 Nina Scant
 Tapa Sudana
 Kerut
 Forest Whitaker
 Cy Bianco
 Laura Benson
 Laurent Lederer
 Constant Anée
 Milo's Entourage
 Yann Collette
 Coroner
 Alexandra Vandernoort
 Sky TV Reporter
 Jocelyne Saint Denis
 Hotel Manager
 André Penvern
 Hotel Clerk
 Maurice Lamy
 Bell Boy
 Pascal Mourier
 Fad TV Cameraman
 Adrien Stahly
 Denis Lepout
 Fad TV Sound Engineers
 Harry Belafonte
 Paolo Bulgari
 Anello Capuano & Friends
 Cher
 Helena Christensen
 Camiliana
 Elsa Klensch
 Serge Molitor
 Claude Montana
 Thierry Mugler
 Tatjana Patitz
 Sonia Rykiel
 Eve Salvail
 Nicola Trussardi
 Themselves
 12,000 feet
 133 minutes
 Dolby stereo
 In colour
 Technicolor
 Anamorphic
 US Title
 Ready to Wear

In Moscow, Sergei purchases two identical Dior neck ties. In Paris, the week of the prêt à porter fashion shows, Olivier de la Fontaine, head of the French Fashion Council, receives one tie with a letter. After a bitter exchange with his wife Isabella, he puts on the tie, and leaves. He visits his lover, fashion designer Simone Lowenthal, also being visited by pregnant supermodel Albertine. At the airport, Kitty Potter, reporter for American fashion channel FRD, is interviewing celebrities, including Regina Krumm of Elle, Sissy Wanamaker of Harper's Bazaar, and Nina Scant of British Vogue. Fashion buyer Major Hamilton angles for an interview but is rejected. Louise Hamilton encounters a Houston Chronicle fashion reporter, Abbe Eisenhower, who has left her bags back in the US. De la Fontaine notes Sergei, just arrived, wearing the same tie. In the ride back to Paris, Olivier dies choking on a ham sandwich. Sergei panics and runs, jumping off the Pont Alexandre. Police Inspector Tantpis and newly widowed Isabella, participating in a dog show, are informed of the death (assumed to be murder) at the same time.

At the Grand Hotel, Eisenhower has to share a room with Washington Post sportswriter Joe Flynn, forced to stay in town and cover the 'murder'. Neither has any clothes but what they're wearing - Sergei having stolen Joe's suitcase - and their animosity turns into a hot sexual affair. English designer Cort Romney with his wife Violetta and 'street' designer Cy Bianco with his assistant/lover Reggie prepare for their shows, the House of Dior, Sonia Rykiel, Christian LaCroix, Issey Miyake, and Jean-Paul Gaultier have theirs; all and sundry are interviewed by Kitty Potter. The three fashion editors pursue the services of sardonic, calculating fashion photographer Milo O'Brannigan.

O'Brannigan - who tricks the women into posing for pictures in humiliating positions - is also working for Jack, Simone Lowenthal's son. Married to model Dane, Jack is having an affair with her sister Kiki. Isabella faints when she encounters Sergei at a fashion show, then keeps her cool when he turns up again at a Bulgari jewellery show; they had been married 42 years earlier in Italy. The Romney and Bianco shows are big successes, but each designer is cheating with the other's partner. The three editors have their revenge on O'Brannigan when Wanamaker steals his negatives. Tantpis learns from an autopsy that Olivier's death was an accident and the case is closed. Simone upsets the whole hypocritical appellation, staging her climactic show entirely with nude models, including Albertine.

For all the fuss it makes about going backstage at Parisian fashion shows, Robert Altman's Pret-a-Porter has remarkably little to show. Nowhere do we see anyone design anything, or figure out how to drape the models to best effect. A show is deemed a success solely on the buzz it sparks among the audience and the media; at no point do we see anyone buy or sell the fanciful togs on display, which would seem to be the point of the whole thing.

Despite Altman piling his trademark contempt onto television fashion reporter Kitty Potter (played with real comic charm by Kim Basinger), his whole approach merely mimics the shooting style of fashion shows on MTV and CNN: lots of handheld stuff, first closing up on the media lovelies in the audience, then watching the models strut their stuff with low-angle, idolatrous pans that self-consciously include the popping flashes of the photographers. From there it is backstage for ▶



A passion for fashion: Julia Roberts, Tim Robbins

◀ the shoulder-to-shoulder post-show jam, a silkier version of the locker room interview. Altman had his cast mingle with the real life personages but all they do is duplicate the posturing of the media-savvy fashion crowd.

There are half-hearted attempts to comment on the whole idea of fashion or fads, but they don't amount to much. Julia Roberts and Tim Robbins play a pair of US journalists, forced to share a hotel room they cannot leave because each has lost baggage. Their forced intimacy soon contributes to some hot and heavy couplings, yet they cannot make any instant judgements on each other's amorous suitability because they're not wearing their usual sartorial signals. Amusing enough, except that even this simple encounter is blighted by Roberts' character becoming some sort of dipso/nympho, unable to resist sex after drinking. It is as if the director can't resist reducing the most innocent characterisation into a mechanism for contempt.

This sourness reaches its nadir with the three fashion editors pursuing fashion photographer Milo O'Brannigan. Although Linda Hunt tries to run a cool and collected variation on the career woman persona, Tracey Ullman and Sally Kellerman dive into stereotypical waters. O'Brannigan, played with condescension by Stephen Rea, tricks the women into humiliating intimacies and photographs them, thus cruelly turning the tables on these merchants of female imagery. Yet the point is utterly subsumed by the gusto with which Altman films their self-abasements; he even has Kellerman repeat her breast-flashing embarrassment from *MASH*. Whatever connivance the women may have in their own plight is swamped by the ferocity of the film's delight in it.

Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni enact a travesty of some of their lesser vehicles, cooing and shouting at one another as they recall a past romance of comically impossible twists. As she is Olivier's widow and he a lowly communist tailor, one supposes there is a point being scored, but whatever it is dies aborning. Forest Whitaker and Richard E. Grant play over-the-top gay designers; the latter in particular confuses swish with character. Neither comes close to the kind of "what-of-it?" campiness Kenneth Williams could toss off. Which is another way of saying the movie doesn't even live up to being *Carry On Couturier*.

What makes the movie reprehensible rather than merely miserable is how it marks the degeneration of the film technique associated with Jean Renoir's great middle period. In his hands, the unanchored camera could pick up and follow any character or story passing by. It joined peasant and noble, sinner and saint, in a narrative democracy that was ultimately one of the century's most sublime expressions of secular faith and hope. But in Altman's hands, the camera becomes an instrument for turning away, creating instead a democracy of contempt.

Henry Sheehan

Priest

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Antonia Bird

Certificate
15

Distributor
Electric Pictures
Production Company
BBC/Electric
Pictures/Polygram
Filmed Entertainment
Executive Producer
Mark Shivas

Producers
George Faber
Josephine Ward
Associate Producer
Joanna Newbery
Production Co-ordinators
Frances Graham
Mary Hare

Location Managers

Lisa Gravelle
Donna Rolfe

Assistant Directors

Brett Fallis
Jamie Annett
Amanda Neal
Fiona Murray

Casting

Janet Goddard

Screenplay

Jimmy McGovern

Script Supervisor

Cecilia Coleshaw

Script Editor

Anna Price

Director of Photography

Fred Tammes

Editor

Susan Spivey

Production Designer

Raymond Langhorn

Art Director

Sue Pow

Costume Design

Jill Taylor

Make-up

Ann Humphreys

Music

Andy Roberts

Sound Recordist

Dennis Cartwright

Dubbing Mixers

Aad Wirtz

Adrian Rhodes

Cast

Linus Roache

Father Greg Pilkington

Tom Wilkinson

Father Matthew

Thomas

Cathy Tyson

Maria Kerrigan

Robert Carlyle

Graham

James Ellis

Father Ellerton

Lesley Sharp

Mrs Unsworth

Robert Pugh

Mr Unsworth

Christine Tremarco

Lisa Unsworth

Paul Barber

Charlie

Nio Fanning

Bishop

Jimmy Coleman

Funeral Director

Bill Dean

Altar Boy

Gilly Coman

Ellie Molloy

Fred Pearson

Patrick

Jimmy Gallagher

Mick Molloy

Tony Booth

Tommy

Charley Wilde

Euan Blair

Tommy's Children

Guiseppa Murphy

Man in Lift

Kim Johnson

Mrs Gobshite

Keith Cole

Mr Gobshite

Adrian Luty

Jehovah's Witness

Mandy Walsh

Stephanie Roscoe

Ann Haydn-Edwards

Mike Haydn

Guests at Wake

Bobby Martino

Bobby

Rupert Pearson

Man on Skateboard

Victoria Arnold

Girl in Confessional

Garth Potts

Boy Car Thief

Ray Williams

Boy with Stutter

Valerie Lilley

Sister Kevin

Kevin Jones

Boy at Beach

Michael Ananias

Charge Sergeant

Mickey Poppins

Reporter

Marsha Thomason

Nurse

Matyelok Gibbs

Housekeeper

John Bennett

Father Redstone

9,768 feet

109 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

● A young Catholic priest, Fr Greg Pilkington, newly appointed to a working-class Liverpool parish, arrives at the presbytery where he meets Fr Matthew Thomas and the housekeeper, Maria Kerrigan. In his first sermon Greg offends Matthew by preaching that individuals, not society are responsible for their sins. For his part Greg objects to Matthew singing karaoke in a pub and is scandalised to find he shares a bed with Maria.

Against Matthew's advice, Greg tries to visit his parishioners on a housing estate, meeting with rejection and abuse. After officiating at a boozy wake he puts on civilian clothes and visits a gay club, where he picks up a young man, Graham. They make love at Graham's flat. The next day Greg takes confession from a group of schoolchildren; one of them, Lisa Unsworth, tells him



True confessions: Linus Roache

her father is sexually abusing her. Greg confronts Unsworth, who is defiantly unrepentant.

Lisa has a fit in the classroom while Greg is teaching. He drops hints to Lisa's mother and her teacher but, trapped by the seal of the confessional, is unable to speak out. Graham, whom Greg has continued to see, comes to Mass, but Greg withholds the sacrament from him. Desperate about Lisa, he urgently prays to Christ to intervene. Mrs Unsworth, coming home unexpectedly, catches her husband and Lisa in bed together. Realising Greg knew, she publicly denounces him.

Greg and Graham, embracing in Greg's car, are caught by the police. Greg pleads guilty and his case is splashed across the headlines. He attempts suicide and is told by the Bishop to quit the diocese. Having vainly tried to see Lisa, he retreats to a remote country parish presided over by the censorious Fr Redstone. Matthew arrives and persuades Greg to come back and say Mass with him. Despite Matthew's impassioned plea for tolerance, half the congregation walk out, and those that remain queue up to take communion from Matthew. Only Lisa comes for communion from Greg. He breaks down and weeps in her arms.

● Snorting like a bull limbering up for the matador, an elderly priest levels the wooden beam he's carrying and charges full-tilt at the elegantly diamond-paned windows of the Bishop's palace. His improvised battering-ram is a five foot crucifix. Outrageous, powerful and brutally funny, the pre-credit sequence of *Priest* gives fair warning of what's in store: a none-too-subtle but trenchant assault on the smug hypocrisies of our time, using organised religion, and specifically the Catholic church, as the chosen blunt instrument.

Jimmy McGovern, here making his debut as a feature film writer, has never scrupled to show his hand, and the sermon he puts in the mouth of the radical Fr Matthew makes it clear enough where he thinks the Church should be standing: "If you exploit your

workforce, shut down schools and hospitals... aren't you interfering in Creation and spitting in the face of God?" "That wasn't a sermon, it was a party political broadcast for the Labour Party," comments Greg sourly. But the film pitilessly exposes the futility of his own attempts at priestly duties, gabbling Last Unction over an insensible body on a speeding hospital trolley, or embarking on an ill-fated round of pastoral visits. (Gratified at last, after countless slammed doors and obscenities, to be invited in, he finds himself faced with two Jehovah's Witnesses eager to make converts.)

Not that *Priest* attacks religion as such; if anything, it affirms the validity of faith by setting it against a backdrop of those who abuse it, the time-servers and bigots - recalling G. K. Chesterton's comment that Christianity wasn't tried and found wanting, but found difficult and not tried. The film never descends to facile anti-religious jibes, and even - by tight cross-cutting between Greg's desperate prayer and Mrs Unsworth catching her incestuous husband in the act - hints at the possibility of direct divine intervention. In the final reel Greg, forgiven by the abused child Lisa, achieves something close to a Bressonian grace.

Bressonian austerity, though, is in fairly short supply. This final scene already packs a massive emotional punch; garnishing it with a solo piano rendition of 'You'll Never Walk Alone' might be thought to verge on overkill. Still, lapses like this scarcely matter, given the fury and savage humour of McGovern's writing and the energy of Antonia Bird's direction. Bird draws from her cast - especially Tom Wilkinson as Matthew and Christine Tremarco as Lisa - performances of raw intensity, but the film's most chilling moment goes to Robert Pugh as Lisa's father, justifying himself ("It's the one thing we'd all like to do") with wet-lipped relish. The Catholic hierarchy probably won't be any too pleased about *Priest*. They should be, though - if only for a film that pays religion the compliment of taking it so seriously.

Philip Kemp

Quiz Show

USA 1994

Director: Robert Redford

Certificate

15

Distributor

Buena Vista
Production Company
Hollywood Pictures
presents a
Wildwood
Enterprises/Baltimore
Pictures Production
Executive Producers
Fred Zollo
Richard Dreyfuss
Judith James

Producers

Robert Redford
Michael Jacobs
Julian Krainin
Michael Nozik

Co-producers

Gail Muttrix
Jeff McCracken
Richard N. Goodwin
Associate Producer
Susan Moore

Production Co-ordinators

Shelley Houis
Ellen M. Hillers

Production Manager

Lydia Dean Pilcher

Location Managers

Amy Herman
David Declerque

B.C. Location Co-ordinator

John A. Crowder Jr

Assistant Directors

Joseph Reidy
Joseph R. Burns
Susan E. Fiore

Casting

Bonnie Timmermann
Voice:
Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Paul Attanasio
Based on the book
"Remembering
America: A Voice From
The Sixties" by Richard
N. Goodwin

Script Supervisor

Sheila Paige

Director of Photography

Michael Ballhaus

Camera Operator

Florian Ballhaus

Video Supervisor

Rick Whitfield

Video Camera Operator

Wayne Paul
Editor
Stu Linder

Associate Editor

Blair Daily

Production Designer

Jon Hutman

Art Director

Tim Galvin

Set Decorator

Samara Schaffer

Set Dressers

Joseph L. Bird
Gilbert H. Gertsen
John Oates
Matthew McCarthy
Conrad Brink
Troy R. Adee
Joseph F. Proscia
Gordon H. Gertsen
John Oates Jr
Gary Levitsky
Jeffrey S. Brink

Storyboard Artists

Kalina Ivanov
Jeff Ballismeyer

Costume Design

Kathy O'Rear

Wardrobe Supervisors

Patricia Eiben
Paul Buboltz

Make-up

Key:
Sharon Ilson
Bernadette Mazur
Kymbra Callaghan

Hairstylists

Key:
Bunny Parker-Adamson

Angelina de Angelis

Francesca Paris

Title Design

Susan Bradley
End Titles:
R/Greenberg Associates,
West, Inc.

Titles/Opticals

Buena Vista Imaging

Music

Mark Isham
Trumpet Solo
Mark Isham

Orchestrations and

Conductor

Ken Kugler
Additional
Orchestrations:
Kim Scharnberg
Dell Hake

Music Supervisor

Katherine Quittner

Music Editor

Craig Pettigrew

Music Scoring Mixer

Stephen Krause

Songs/Music Extracts

"Mack the Knife" by
Kurt Weill, Bertolt
Brecht, Marc Blitzstein,
performed by Bobby
Darin; "Dancing in the
Dark" by Arthur
Schwartz, Howard
Dietz; "Moritat" by Kurt
Weill, Bertolt Brecht,
performed by Lyle
Lovett

Sound Design

Gary Rydstrom

Supervising Sound Editor

Richard Hymns

ADR Editor

Rob Fruchtmann

Foley Editor

Sandina Bailo-Lape

Dialogue Editors

Michael Silvers
Sara Bolder

Sound Recordist

Joel Holland

Sound Mixer

Tod A. Maitland

Re-recording Mixers

Tom Johnson
Gary Rydstrom

Sound Effects Editor

Ken Fischer

Cast

John Turturro
Herbie Stempel

Rob Morrow

Dick Goodwin
Ralph Fiennes
Charles Van Doren

Paul Scofield

Mark Van Doren
David Paymer
Dan Enright
Hank Azaria

Albert Freedman

Christopher McDonald
Jack Barry
Johann Carlo
Toby Stempel

Elizabeth Wilson
Dorothy Van Doren

Allan Rich

Robert Kintner
Mira Sorvino
Sandra Goodwin

George Martin

Chairman
Paul Guilfoyle
Lishman
Griffin Dunne

Account Guy

Michael Mantell
Pennebaker
Byron Jennings

Moomaw
Ben Shenkman
Childress
Timothy Busfield

Fred

Jack Gilpin

Jack

Bruce Altman

Gene

Martin Scorsese

Sponsor

Joda Herschman

Lester Stempel

Ernie Sabella

Car Salesman

Barry Levinson

Dave Garroway

Debra Monk

Kintner's Secretary

Mario Cantone

Passerby

Timothy Britten Parker

Researcher

Grace Phillips

Mrs Nearing

Jerry Grayson

Limo Driver

Scott Lucy

Matt Keeslar

Ron Scott Bertozzi

NBC Pages

Harriet Sansom Harris

Enright's Secretary

Mary Shultz

Freedman's Secretary

Dave Wilson

Director

Robert Caminiti

Associate Director

Eddie Korbich

Lighting Director

Le Clanche du Rand

Cornwall Neighbour

Carole Shelley

Cornwall Aunt

Shawn Batten

Cornwall Cousins

Jeffrey Nordling

John Van Doren

Gina Nice

Mrs John Van Doren

Vince O'Brien

Bunny Wilson

Adam Kilgour

Thomas Merton,
The Monk

Richard Self

Congressman Devine

Bill Moor

Congressman Rogers

Nicholas Kepros

Congressman Flynt

Barry Snider

Congressman Springer

Chuck Adamson

Congressman Mack

Joseph Attanasio

Congressman

Derounian

Ban Wakefield

Hamilton Fish

Professors at Book Party

Merwin Goldsmith

Writer at Book Party

Ileana Douglas

Woman at Book Party

Gretchen Egolf

Student at Book Party

Stephen Pearlman

Judge Schweitzer

Anthony Fusco

Librarian

Douglas McGrath

Snodgrass

Calista Flockhart

Alysa Shwidel

Barnard Girls

Kelly Coffield

Dede Pochos

Maria Radman

David Stepkin

Queens Neighbours

Steve Roland

Today Announcer

Bernie Sheredy

Joe Lisi

Greg Martin

Reporters

Rene

Woman at Door

Neil Leifer

Psychoanalyst

Caryn Krooth

Blonde

Mario Contassini

Waiter

Pat Russell

NBC Secretary

Bill Cwikowski

Challenger

William Fichtner

Stage Manager

Vincent J. Burns

Crew Member

Katherine Turturro

#1 Mom

Joseph Attanasio

Congressman

Derounian

Ban Wakefield

Hamilton Fish

Professors at Book Party

Merwin Goldsmith

Writer at Book Party

Ileana Douglas

Woman at Book Party

Gretchen Egolf

Student at Book Party

Stephen Pearlman

Judge Schweitzer

Anthony Fusco

Librarian

Douglas McGrath

Snodgrass

Calista Flockhart

Alysa Shwidel

Barnard Girls

Kelly Coffield

Dede Pochos

Maria Radman

David Stepkin

Queens Neighbours

Steve Roland

Today Announcer

Bernie Sheredy

Joe Lisi

Greg Martin

Reporters

Rene

Woman at Door

Neil Leifer

Psychoanalyst

Caryn Krooth

Blonde

Mario Contassini

Waiter

Pat Russell

NBC Secretary

Bill Cwikowski

Challenger

William Fichtner

Stage Manager

Vincent J. Burns

Crew Member

Katherine Turturro

#1 Mom

11,947 feet

132 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

by Art

Prints by

Technicolor

sub-committee. Coming to New York, Dick's initial inclination to believe Herbie is swayed by Charles's culture and charm - even more so when he is invited to the New England birthday party of his father, the eminent poet Mark Van Doren. However, he meets another ex-contestant, James Snodgrass, who gives him proof that questions were fixed. Meanwhile Charles, troubled by his conscience, persuades Dan to let him lose to a new challenger. Watched by Dick, he fails a question to which Dick knows Charles knew the answer. Charles gets a lucrative job on NBC's *Today* show.

Brushing off Dan's crude attempt at bribery, Dick arranges for Herbie to appear before the Committee. He privately confronts Charles with the truth but agrees not to involve him; his only concern is to nail NBC. But Herbie, giving testimony, gets overexcited and implicates Charles. Subpoenaed to appear, Charles confesses the fraud to his father, who agrees to accompany him to the hearings. In their testimony Rittenholm and NBC head

Les Roseaux sauvages

France 1993

Director: André Téchiné

Certificate
15
Distributor
Gala Films
Production Companies
Ima Films/Les Films
Alain Sarde
In association with
Canal+/Ima
productions
La Sept Arte
Sfp productions
Producers
Alain Sarde
Georges Benayoun
Production Associate
Chantal Poupard
Production Manager
Jean-Jacques Albert
Post-production Supervisor
Francis Doré
Assistant Directors
Denis Bergonhe
Anne-Isabelle Estrada
Casting
Michel Nasri
Jacques Grant
Screenplay
André Téchiné
Gilles Taurand
Olivier Massart
Continuity
Claudine Taulere
Director of Photography
Jeanne Lapoirie
Camera Operator
Germain Desmoulins
Editor
Martine Giordano
Production Design
Pierre Soula
Set Dresser
Agnes Levy
Costume Design
Elisabeth Tavernier
Make-up/Hairstylist
Youssef Ferhat
Songs/Music Extracts
"Barbara Anne" by Fred
Frassert, performed by
The Beach Boys;
"Runaway" by Del
Shannon, Max Crook,
performed by Del
Shannon; "Let's Twist
Again" performed by
Chubby Checker;
"Smoke Gets in Your
Eyes" by Otto Harbach,
Jerome Kern,
performed by The
Platters; "Adagio for
Strings Opus II" by
Samuel Barber; "Les
Voix de printemps"
by Johann Strauss II,
performed by
L'Orchestre Symphonique
d'Innsbruck;

"Quand les citronniers
refleurissent" by
Johann Strauss II,
performed by
Orchestre National
de Vienne
Supervising Sound Editor
Jean-Luc Marino
Sound Mixers
François Groult
Bruno Tarriere
Sound Effects
Jerome Levy
Stunt Co-ordinator
Alain Figlarz

Cast
Frédéric Corny
Henri
Gaël Morel
François
Elodie Bouchez
Maïté
Stéphane Rideau
Serge
Michèle Moretti
Madame Alvarez
Nathalie Vignes
Young Bride
Jacques Nolot
Monsieur Morelli
Eric Kreikenmayer
Young Bridegroom
Michel Ruhl
Monsieur Cassagne
Fatia Maïté
Aïcha
Claudine Taulere
Nurse
Elodie Soulinhac
Girl at Party
Dominique Bovard
Monsieur Simonet
Guards
Chief Officer Carré
Officer
Paul Simonet
Bridegroom's Father
Charles Picot
Headmaster
Christophe Maitre
Gym Instructor
Bordes Fernand Raouly
Bridegroom's Mother
Michel Voisin
Priest
Denis Bergonhe
Pump Attendant

9,180 feet
102 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Subtitles

1962, Villeneuve-sur-Lot in south-west France. Pierre Bartolo, about to leave for service in Algeria, is getting married. He confides to a local school-teacher, Madame Alvarez, that he wishes to desert and asks her, in her capacity as a Communist Party activist, to assist him. She declines.

At the boarding school where Alvarez teaches, the class includes local boys François and Serge (Pierre's brother), and new arrival Henri Mariani who is Algerian-born and unpopular with both classmates and teacher. François and Serge have an arrangement to help one another with their classwork which develops into a brief homosexual liaison. This leaves Serge unaffected

but François is unhappily persuaded of his homosexuality. He confides his feelings to his closest friend, Madame Alvarez's daughter, Maïté.

News arrives that Pierre has been killed in Algeria. Serge walks away from the funeral, disgusted by military rhetoric about his brother's heroism - he knew that Pierre wanted to desert. François sends Maïté after him. On hearing the news, Madame Alvarez suffers a nervous breakdown. Her replacement, Monsieur Morelli, offers Henri extra tuition to help him pass the baccalauréat. Henri's hostility subsides until he hears about OAS defeats in Algeria.

Raging, Henri leaves the boarding school at night, burning PCF posters as he goes. On the point of torching the local Communist HQ, he spots Maïté within. Hesitantly, she offers him coffee. Henri makes a nervous advance. She refuses him but reads him the letter from his mother that he has never dared open. After Henri reveals his original intention to incinerate the HQ, Maïté orders him to leave.

On the eve of the baccalauréat results, François, Serge, Henri and Maïté go swimming together. Serge and François come to a reconciliation while Maïté and Henri make love before he leaves. Madame Alvarez, released from hospital, meets Monsieur Morelli for a meal where they discuss Henri. Morelli introduces his Algerian wife. Madame Alvarez watches as they drive away.

André Téchiné's most recent feature was originally commissioned by the Franco-German Television channel ATE as part of the series *Tous les garçons et les filles de leur âge* in which French directors, including Patricia Mazuy, Cedric Kahn and Olivier Assayas, were asked to contribute films based on their recollections of adolescence. *Les Roseaux sauvages* depicts that time when angst and euphoria go hand in hand, but Téchiné contains sentimental and familiar elements by addressing the wider political dimensions of his teenage years: 1962, the Evian Accords and the final actions of the Algerian War of Independence.

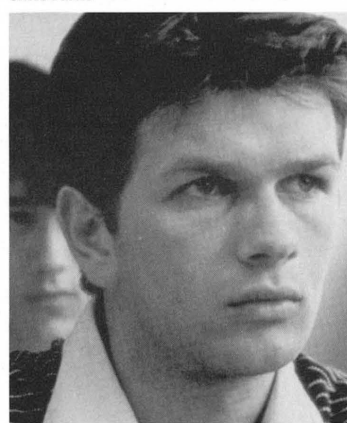
As context for the sentimental education of four adolescent characters, Téchiné's handling of this historical moment is delicate and telling. Henri, an Algerian-born French boy whose father died in the Algerian War, is the intercessor. As a self-proclaimed supporter of the neo-Fascist, anti-independence OAS, he brings the war firmly into the consciousness of the other teenagers. But as an unrepentant, anti-social, metropolitan dandy, dismissive of the provincialism of his peers, he takes an obdurate, adolescent pride in his pain, converting it into the badge of his difference from the others. François, in coming to terms with his homosexuality, is briefly smitten by Henri's darkness, whereas Serge, having lost his older brother in the War, regards Henri as the enemy, as does Maïté, the daughter of communist militant Madame Alvarez.

Just as Téchiné recruits the political to deepen his portrait of adolescent relationships, so period detail is accommodated with an unobtrusiveness that makes the film something other than the familiar parade of period pop nostalgia and fashion curiosity. As *Cahiers du cinéma* has noted, Téchiné privileges "the tension of the moment above the recreation of the time, the dramatic detail over faithful historical reconstitution." Hit records of *l'époque yé-yé* (The Beach Boys, Chubby Checker, The Platters) and style details (Serge compliments Maïté on her hairstyle as being "très Françoise Hardy") add density to characterisation and narrative development. With adolescence defined by the competing forces of sexual yearning and political intransigence, the setting in the south-west of France thus becomes an environment from which the young crave to escape - all except Serge who flatly states his intentions to marry and settle down in the region to lead the ancestral peasant life.

If Henri is the film's most enigmatic and disturbed character, François is the one with whom the film-maker seems to feel the greatest affinity, presenting his sexual confusion, self-loathing and intellectual excitement with great sympathy. François brings people together, encouraging Maïté to comfort Serge after his brother's funeral and, less intentionally, enabling the consummation of Maïté and Henri's furtive and impossible love. It is not that Téchiné gives François anything as straightforward as a preponderance of point-of-view shots, it is simply this trajectory that interests him most. In this sense, *Les Roseaux sauvages* gathers its force from the careful assembly of social moments and everyday locales - weddings, schoolrooms, cafés, funerals. The result is that by the close, when the four go swimming together while waiting for their baccalauréat results, a crucial threshold in their lives has been reached.

It is this sequence that best sums up the stylistic virtues of the film - an unforced French naturalism that reaches an near-Renoirian lyricism on the banks of the river. Blessed with some finely judged, completely authentic performances, *Les Roseaux sauvages* is a film that avoids the potential wistfulness of its subject matter and that remains in the mind.

Chris Darke



Boys keep swinging: Gaël Morel

Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book

USA 1994

Director: Stephen Sommers

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Buena Vista
Production Company
Walt Disney Pictures
Executive Producers
Sharad Patel
Mark Damon
Lawrence Mortorff
Producers
Edward S. Feldman
Raju Patel
Executive Co-producer
Rajendra Kumar
Co-producer
Michael J. Kagan
Associate Producers
India:
Yash Johar
US:
Eric Angelson
Production Supervisor
Carl Griffin
Production Co-ordinators
LA:
Kate Seelye
UK/India:
Carol Regan
Joyce Turner
Hilde Odelga
Shernaz Italia
US:
Kathy Sarreal
Unit Managers
Terry Bamber
Rashid Abbasi
Unit Production Managers
US:
Sharon Mann
UK/India:
Charles Salmon
Location Managers
Robert Jordan
US:
Edward Bowen
2nd Unit Directors
Greg Michael
US:
David Ellis
Assistant Directors
Artist Robinson
Christian P. Della
Penna
Adam Somner
Charles Simmers
India:
Terry Bamber
Sirish Harman
Ajit Kumar
US:
Christopher T. Gerrity
Sean McCarron
Artist Robinson
Casting
Celestia Fox
Associate:
Hayley Murt
Louis Elman
Screenplay
Stephen Sommers
Ronald Yanover
Mark D. Goldman
Story
Ronald Yanover
Mark D. Goldman
Based on characters
from *The Jungle Book* by
Rudyard Kipling
Script Supervisors
Sylvie Chesneau
India:
Sue Jones
US:
Jeanne Marie Byrd
Director of Photography
Juan Ruiz-Anchia
2nd Unit Directors
of Photography
Peter Robertson
US:
Michael Benson
Additional Photography
John V. Fante

Motion Control Camera
Joel Hladecek
Underwater Photography
Mike Valentine
Camera Operators
Ian Fox
Peter Robertson
US:
David Emmerichs
Paul Varrieur
Jeff Moore
Steadicam Operators
Peter Robertson
US:
David Emmerichs
Visual Effects
Buena Vista Visual
Effects
Visual Effects Supervisors
Peter Montgomery
Chris Evans
Plate:
John V. Fante
Visual Effects Producers
Carolyn Soper
Craig Barron
Visual Effects Co-ordinator
Denise Davis
Visual Effects Editor
Juliette Yager
Digital Supervisors
Dorne Huelber
Craig Newman
Digital Co-ordinator
Lydia Bottegoni
Digital Compositing
Kevin Koneval
Winston Quitasol
Bruce Tauscher
Digital Artwork
Elissa Bello
Allen Gonzales
Computer Generated Snake
Wally Schaab
Optical Effects Supervisor
Mark Dornfeld
Matte Paintings
Paul Lasaine
Matte World Digital
Matte Artist
Caroleen Green
Editor
Bob Ducsay
Production Designer
Allan Cameron
Art Directors
Steve Spence
Nitin Desai
Ram Yedekar
US:
James Feng
Set Decorator
Crispian Sallis
Scenic Artists
Barbara Jene Taylor
Terry Sylvester
Michael Clark
Richard Colwell
Melissa Frye
Phil Goldstein
Donna Hattin
James Passanante
Storyboard Artist
Martin Asbury
Special Effects Supervisors
David Watkins Snr
US:
Michael N. Arbogast
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Eddie Surkin
Treasure Room Snake
Animated Extras
Electronic Campfire Effects
Magic Gadgets
Costume Design
John Mollo
Costume Supervisors
Stewart Meachem
Sujata Sharma
Make-up
Cindy Williams
Mustaque Ashrafi
Noriko Watanabe

Special Animal Make-up Effects
Kurtzman, Nicotero & Berger EFX Group

Hairstylists
Vera Mitchell
Deanna Yacullo

Title Design
Susan Bradley

Titles/Opticals
Buena Vista Imaging

Title Graphic Effects
Michael Curtis

Music
Basil Poledouris

Music Conductor
David Snell

Orchestrations
Greig McRitchie

Supervising Music Editor
Tom Villano

Music Editor
George A. Martin

Music Extracts
"Blue Danube",
"Emperor Waltz",
"Wine, Women and Song" by Johann Strauss

Supervising Sound Editors
Leslie Shatz
Teresa Eckton

Dialogue Editors
David Cohen
Richard Quinn

Sound Mixers
Joseph Geisinger
Paul Bacca

Music:
Tim Boyle

Music Recorders
Geoff Foster

ADR Mixers
Doc Kane
Ed Colyer

Foley Mixers
Michael Semanick
Richard Duarte

Sound Re-recording Mixers
Leslie Shatz
David Parker

Sound Effects Editors
Kim B. Christensen
E. Jeanne Putnam
Kyrsten Mate-Comoglio
Malcolm Fife

Foley Artists
Margie O'Malley
Jennifer Myers

Stunt Co-ordinators
India:
Gerry Crampton
US:
David Ellis
Tim Davison

Armourers
Mike Ball

US:
William Curtin

Animal Trainers
Head:
Steve Martin
Monkey:
Keith Bauer

Cast
Jason Scott Lee
Mowgli
Cary Elwes
Captain Boone
Lena Headey
Kitty Brydon
Sam Neill
Major Brydon
John Cleese
Doctor Plumford
Jason Fleming
Wilkins
Stefan Kalipha
Buldeo
Ron Donachie
Harley
Anirudh Agrawal
Tabaqui
Faran Tahir
Nathoo
Sean Naogeli
Mowgli, age 5
Joanna Wolff
Kitty, age 5
Liza Walker
Alice
Rachel Robertson
Rose
Natalie Morse
Margaret
Gerry Crampton
Sergeant Major
Amrik Gill
Butler
Rick Glassey
Sergeant Claibourne
Casey
Baloo
Shadow
Bagheera
Shannon
Grey Brother
Lowell
King Louis
Bombay
Shere Khan

10,001 feet
111 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Prints by
Technicolor
Anamorphic

India, the days of the Raj. British army officer major Brydon arrives to take up his new post, together with his five-year-old daughter Kitty and his friend Dr Julius Plumford. They are accompanied by an Indian guide and his son Mowgli, also five. Their journey is interrupted by the tiger, Shere Khan, who, Mowgli's father explains, has come to remind them of the jungle law. In camp, Mowgli, entranced by Kitty, presents her with a flower. When he demands a kiss, she runs off but then gives him her bracelet. That night, Mowgli's father is killed by Shere Khan, and the boy is carried off on a flaming cart into the jungle, together with his pet wolf cub, Grey Brother. There they encounter the black panther, Bagheera, who leads them to the safety of a wolf pack. Mowgli later frees the bear cub Baloo from being trapped by a log.

Years later, Mowgli, Grey Brother and

Baloo, all adult, are still inseparable. A monkey steals Kitty's bracelet from Mowgli, who pursues it to Hanuman, an ancient city inhabited by apes. Their orang-utan king leads him to a vault filled with treasures, including a jewelled dagger. Mowgli defeats the giant snake Kaa, and wins back the bracelet.

Kitty ventures into the jungle and encounters Mowgli. He is challenged by her suitor, Captain William Boone, but fends off the officer and his men. Mowgli sneaks into town to visit Kitty; she realises who he is, but he is apprehended by Boone's soldiers and imprisoned by the brutal Sergeant Harley. Kitty tells her father of Mowgli's identity, and proposes to "civilise" him; Mowgli is freed and Kitty and Plumford teach him English and the ways of British life. He in turn introduces her to the secrets of the jungle. Brydon, anxious about their friendship, proposes that she return to England.

Buldeo, an Indian guide, tells Boone about Hanuman, and Boone determines to find its treasure. He proposes marriage to Kitty, who reluctantly accepts. At a grand reception, the engagement is announced, and Mowgli, insulted by Boone's officers, returns to the jungle. Kitty breaks off the engagement and prepares to return to England. As she leaves, Boone and his men set off for Hanuman; Mowgli, attacked, manages to escape them, but Baloo is shot. Kitty's party is ambushed by Buldeo and his bandits, who shoot Brydon. Mowgli intervenes, but Kitty is abducted. Mowgli leads Boone and his men towards the city, but then escapes, and sends the wounded Brydon home by elephant. Boone's men die one by one: Harley in quicksand, a bandit falling from a rock, and the officer Wilkins attacked by Shere Khan.

In the lost city, the party are greeted by the orang-utan – dubbed "King Louis" – and Buldeo drowns in a chamber of sand. Boone and Mowgli do battle in the treasure chamber. Boone, attempting to escape with his loot, is killed by the great snake. Outside the city, Mowgli finally encounters Shere Khan, who greets him peacefully, recognising him "not as a man but as a creature of the jungle". Mowgli and Kitty return to be reunited with Brydon, Plumford, and a healed Baloo.

Director Stephen Sommers seems to have become Disney's resident *retour aux sources* specialist, with this convincingly Kipling-esque *Jungle Book* following his respectful return to Mark Twain in *The Adventures of Huck Finn*. The real source here, however, is the 1942 *The Jungle Book*, made under the aegis of Alexander Korda. There are several moments of pure Korda here – notably Mowgli's chase through a teeming market, reminiscent of *The Thief of Baghdad* as well as its most recent descendant, Disney's *Aladdin*, and the extraordinary matte shots of the monkey city of Hanuman, in which the films slips into an effective but incongruous pastiche of 40s Technicolor.

Most Korda-esque, however, is the reference in Jason Scott Lee's performance



Don't call me mancub: Jason Scott Lee, Lena Headey

to that vintage icon of kitsch exoticism, Sabu. Languorously snoozing loin-clothed on a branch, or resplendent in turbaned chic, Lee knowingly plays up the camp aspects of his forbear as a sexy pose, but rather plays down the androgyny – nothing too louche for the underage Saturday matinee crowd, even if they have been raised on Brad Pitt and Take That.

Lee's casting is the film's most troubling aspect. He has Sabu's repertoire of attitudes to a tee – skittish cheeky, lovelorn, or crouching defensively in time-honoured wild-child fashion – but never for a second do we believe he's Indian. Having starred in *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*, *Rapa Nui* and *A Map of the Human Heart*, Lee seems to have become Hollywood's all-purpose ethnic – Chinese, Inuit, Easter Islander, any nationality considered. This lapse seems all the more sloppy in view of the fact that the film, despite the presence of the father and son Patel team and the veteran Shri Rajendra Kumar in the production credits, has no real Asian characters to speak of. Apart from a caravan of non-speaking parts, there is only Mowgli's father, present simply to represent a sly *joie de vivre* principle, and Buldeo, whose evil nature is signalled from the outset by black robes and bristling moustache, making him a dead ringer for the wicked Jafar in *Aladdin* – nothing like a little helpful sign posting for the under-fives.

This apart, the film pays efficient lip service to Disney's current mood of political correctness. It is quite clear who the villains are here – not the denizens of the jungle (Shere Khan is less a ravening monster than a righteous, if wilful, deity), but rather the venal colonialists under the command of caddish Cary Elwes (looking more than ever like a corrupt Macauley Culkin). The film plays effectively on the reversal of 'jungle' and 'civilisation', with King Louis and his apes embodying a more engaging aristocratic ideal than Boone and his posh but brutal retinue. It's hard to see, though, quite what the film imagines the Raj itself to be about, and what Bry-

don's role as commanding officer is meant to be, other than to exemplify the good man among bounders and fulfilminate jovially against elephants.

The film's trump card, however, and its drawback for younger audiences, is the fact that it is relatively free of animals. Sommers avoids the anthropomorphism of Disney tradition; the beasts don't talk or indeed do much at all, other than act as a correlative to Mowgli himself. He's said to be obscurely akin to the tiger, and it is Shere Khan who finally endorses his status as an authentic jungle dweller. We never learn anything about Mowgli's youth among the wolves, and cuteness is definitely out – apart from the uncomfortable sight of the cub Baloo with his head jammed in a log. The hordes of monkeys come off best, in effectively creepy sequences that owe a lot to *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. But on the whole, the animal kingdom is marked as more definitively 'other' than it has ever been before in a Disney film. The human/animal distinction is paradoxically marked by the use of digitals to bring Mowgli and the wild cats together face to snout in seamlessly composed shots that actually signal their irreducible separation.

Still we know what we're getting from the start. As Sam Neill announces in his opening voice-over, "this is a story about fangs and claws and talons but mostly it is about love." In other words, we get a good barnstormer, more Rider Haggard than Kipling, and a love intrigue between Mowgli and a brisk Lena Headey that is unusually sexually charged for Disney (although the question of racial difference is neatly elided in the chaste final kiss). The film slyly acknowledges the fact that younger viewers may feel short-changed by the absence of a recognisable cartoon Baloo and co; John Cleese – a bluff, jolly uncle throughout – gestures at the food and other splendours of a Raj ball and invites Mowgli to partake of "the bare necessities of life".

Jonathan Romney

S.F.W.

USA 1994

Director: Jeffery Levy

Certificate
18

Distributor
Rank

Production Company
A & M Films
In association with
Propaganda Films

Executive Producer
Sigurjon Sighvatsson

Producer
Dale Pollock

Executive in Charge of Production
Tim Clawson

Co-producer
Mike Nelson

Associate Producer
Gloria Lopez

Production Co-ordinator
Julia Kalchheim

Unit Production Manager
Mike Nelson

Location Manager
Boyd H. Wilson

Assistant Directors
John E. Vohlers
Harry Jarvis
Michael Parker

Casting
Owens Hill
Rachel Abrams

Screenplay
Danny Rubin
Jeffrey Levy
Based on the novel by
Andrew Wellman

Script Supervisor
Sarah Auerswald

Director of Photography
Peter Deming

Graphics
Monica Fedrick

Editor
Lauren Zuckerman
"Babs Wyler" Montage:
Poppy Day

Production Designer
Eve Cauley

Art Director
Philip Messina

Set Decorator
Don G. Smith

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Frank Ceglia

Costume Design
Debra McGuire

Wardrobe Supervisor
Jemma Scarisbrick

Make-up
Cheryl Voss
Lisa Layman

Hairstylists
Suzanne P. Sanders
Marianna Lucido

Titles/Opticals
CFL/Pacific Title

Music
Graeme Revell

Music Supervisors
Sharon Boyle
Dana Sano
Jon McHugh

Music Editor
Joshua Winget

Music Co-ordinator
Richard Henderson

Songs/Music Extracts
"Jesus Christ Pose"
by Chris Cornell,
Matthew D. Cameron,
Kim A. Thail, Ben
Shepherd, performed
by Soundgarden; "Can
I Stay?" by Kurt Elzner,
Patrice Tullai,
performed by Pretty
Mary Sunshine;
"Negasonic Teenage
Warhead" by Dave
Wyndorf, performed
by Monster Magnet;
"Creep" by Thomas
Yorke, Jonathan
Greenwood, Philip
Selway, Colin
Greenwood, Edward
O'Brien, performed by

Radiohead; "Say What
You Want" by Kat
Bjelland, Lori Barbero,
Maureen Herman,
performed by Babes
in Toyland; "Like
Suicide" by and
performed by Chris
Cornell; "Speedball"
by Andrew Cairns,
Michael Keegan, Fyfe
Ewing, performed by
Therapy?; "Surrender"
by Rick Nielsen,
performed by Paw;
"Teenage Whore" by
Courtney Love, Eric
Erlandson, Caroline
Gomard, Jill Emery,
performed by Hole;
"S.F.W." by and
performed by GWAR;
"Light in the Black"
by Ritchie Blackmore,
Ronnie Dio, performed
by Ritchie Blackmore's
Rainbow; "Mary, Mary"
by Adam Arnold
Pringle, Susan Katrina
Grant, Christopher
Ronald Paine, Sydney
Green, performed by
Mantissa; "Two at a
Time" by Tod A.
performed by Cop
Shoot Cop; "Remember
Slow Fox?" by Ole
Georg; "Get Your Gun"
by Brian Warner, Scott
Putesky, Brad Stewart,
performed by Marilyn
Manson; "No Fuck'n
Problem" by Michael
Muir, Michael Clark,
performed by Suicidal
Tendencies; "Nose-
picker" by Marc
Puryear, Chris Jacks,
Brooks Bruner,
performed by 3 Dot 5;
"In Anger" by and
performed by Ken
Ramme, Lawrence
Shrage; "All Systems
Go" by Nikki Bernard;
"Carry Me Away", "At
the Waldorf" by and
performed by Steve
Cairn, Richard
Johnson; "Spab's
Theme" by and
performed by Stephen
Dorff; "America the
Beautiful" by Katherine
L. Bates, Samuel G.
Ward; "As Long As
We've Got Each Other"
by Steve Dorff, John
Bettis, performed by
Stephen Dorff, Reese
Witherspoon; "Also
Sprach Zarathustra"
by Richard Strauss,
performed by Vladimir
Ashkenazy, The
Cleveland Orchestra

**Sound Design/
Supervising Sound Editor**
Douglas Murray

Dialogue Editor
Mark Levinson

ADR Editor
Jay Boeckelheide

Foley Editor
Malcolm Fife

Sound Mixer
David B. Chornow

Foley Mixer
Michael Semanick

Sound Recordist
W. Phillip Rogers

Foley Recordist
Jim Pasque

**Supervising Sound
Re-recording Mixer**
Mark Berger

Sound Re-recording Mixer
Samuel Lehmer

Sound Effects Editor
Mark Jan
Wlodarkiewicz

Foley Artists
Margie O'Malley
Jennifer Myers

Stunt Co-ordinator
Steve M. Davison

Cast

Stephen Dorff
Cliff Spab

Reese Witherspoon
Wendy Pfister

Jake Bussey
Morrow Streeter

Joey Lauren Adams
Monica Dice

Pamela Gidley
Janet Streeter

David Barry Gray
Scott Spab

Jack Noseworthy
Joe Dice

Richard Portnow
Gerald Parsley

Edward Wiley
Mr Spab

Lela Ivey
Mrs Spab

Natasha Gregson Wagner
Kristen

Annie McEnroe
Dolly

Virgil Frye
Earl

Francesca P. Roberts
Kim Martin

Soon Teck Oh
Milt Morris

Blair Tefkin
Allison Ash

Steven Antin
Dick Zetterland

Melissa Lechner
Sandy Hooten

Lenny Wolpe
Phil Connors

Natalie Strauss
Rita Connors

Tobey Maguire
Al

Bana Allan Young
Johnny

John Roarke
Phil Donahue Clone/
Sam Donaldson Clone/
Alan Dershowitz/
Ted Koppel Clone/
Larry King Clone

Amber Benson
Barbara "Babs" Wyler

China Kantner
Female Pantyhose
Gunman

Kathryn Atwood
Pebbles Goren

Caroline Barclay
Mindy Lawford

Sylvia Short
Doctor Travis

Sandra Phillips
Gary Grossman

Talent Agents
Hotel Receptionist

Frank Collison
Stoner Witness

Stephanie Friedman
Dori Smelling

Adam Small
Burger Boy Manager

Ben Slack
Madison Heights Mayor

Carol Hankins
Nervous Woman
on Talkshow

Kristen Ernst
Teenage Girl
on Talkshow

Mil Nicholson
Woman at
Homecoming

Charles Font
John Chaldez

Corey Gunestad
Burger Boy Workers

William Scott Brown
Lisa Dinkins

Amber Edam
Jerome Front

Susan Harney
Philip Moon

Joanne Takahashi
R. W. Wilson

Reporters
Ada Gorn

Jon Gudmundsson
Bernadette Elise

Photographers
Gary Coleman
Himself

8,598 feet
96 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Eastman Color



Siege mentality: Stephen Dorff, Reese Witherspoon

boy. Meanwhile Spab's attempts to leave town fail. A flashback reveals that he and Joe shot and killed Split Image members before being shot themselves. Spab meets Wendy, they visit the Funstop and bed down at Spab's hotel. Next day, they appear on a school stage in front of hundreds of pupils who are chanting "S.F.W.". From their midst, pupil Babs Wyler shouts "everything matters" and guns down Wendy and Spab. Media attention now focuses on Babs and her acronym slogan "E.M.". The wounded couple lie in hospital together, repeating dialogue from the Funstop siege.

A gormless blond with a dead-end job visits a late night store to buy beer and junk food and is taken hostage by terrorists who look like refugees from the post-punk group 'Devo'. While being constantly televised, he witnesses three deaths and becomes the protector of fellow hostage Wendy. Split Image are more or less silent. Their cameras provide Spab with the chance to free-associate about his position as a dumb blond who is, furthermore, a 36-day hostage in a meaningless siege. "So fucking what?", a phrase provoked perhaps by the stress of the siege but one surely pertinent to his outside life, is taken and turned into something larger. Show hosts and anchormen speculate about his philosophy. Essentially a passive figure who exercises no control over his life or his utterances, Spab finds that celebrity status reinforces his sense of alienation. His only touchstones with reality are an incoherent anger and a shell-shocked desire to find Wendy and relive their Funstop dialogue.

To say that S.F.W. is a deeply cynical film is an understatement. It is as much about the utter vacuity of the American media as it is about Spab's own emptiness. His derailed Forrest Gumpisms are, for the standard 15 minutes, thought to be fraught with existential meaning. The film switches continually

between chat show transmissions, excerpts from TVM (an MTV pastiche) and Spab's own flashbacks. He, Wendy and Babs are all asked the same dumb questions by journalists. Such media cynicism is convenient. If all media is vapid and exploitative, then so too are any criticisms of it. With this logic, S.F.W. contains a strategy for its own critical immunity.

Since the film trades off the perennial adolescent search for meaning and purpose, this in-built critical pre-empting is perhaps academic. School playgrounds could soon find themselves dividing into camps: "S.F.W." versus "E.M.". Parallels might be sought linking Spab (a character created by Andrew Wellman for a 1989 novella) and the late rock star Kurt Cobain, who committed suicide last year. Since Wellman's book predates Cobain's death, the only link between Spab and the rock star is that they both were prisoners of their own mass-market image.

Spab's world is a suitably hopeless blue-collar community where a dignity in labour (burgers anyone?) is non-existent. For the most part, the characters are as vacant as late night parking lots, their values a down-market version of Bret Easton Ellis' modish nihilism. The only truly shocking moment occurs when hostage Kim Martin, a nursing mother, is killed. The packaging of Spab as a folk anti-hero is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the entire film. Here is a character completely constrained by junk culture, whose name has, for British audiences at least, an additional resonance: Spab being one letter different from Spam luncheon meat. Indeed, Spab returns from the siege to find his employer selling Spab-burgers. Individuality threatened by commodity status is not a new idea, but if many other films have provided a more trenchant analysis, in none has the protagonist's incoherence and fragility been as apparent as in S.F.W.

Louise Gray

Les Silences du palais (Saint el qusur / The Silences of the Palace)

France/Tunisia 1994

Director: Moufida Tlatli

Certificate

Not Yet Issued

Distributor

ICA

Production Company

Ahmed Baha Eddine
Attia and Richard
Magnien present
A Mat Films/
Cinétéfilms/

Magfilm co-production

With the participation

of the Tunisian

Ministry of Culture/

The French Ministry

of Foreign Affairs

The French Ministry

of Culture

Channel 4 Television (UK)

Canal Horizon (Tunisia)

Hubert Bals Foundation

(Rotterdam)

Agence de Coopération

Culturelle et Technique

Producers

Ahmed Baha

Eddine Attia

Richard Magnien

Production Managers

Tarak Harbi

Dora Bouchacha

Fourati

Casting

Adel Koudhaei

Screenplay

Moufida Tlatli

Script Supervisor

Najet Ghalba

Adaptation and Dialogue

Nouri Bouzid

Director of Photography

Youssef Ben Youssef

Camera Operator

Chedi Chaouachi

Editors

Moufida Tlatli

Camille Cotte

Kerim Hammouda

Set Design

Claude Bennys

Mondher Dhrif

Set Decorators

Rachid Basti

Khaled Ben Massaoud

Costumes

Magdalena Garcia

Make-up

Fatma Jaziri

Hairstylist

Assia Baaiz

Music

Anouar Brahme

Sound Editor

Gérard Rousseau

Sound Recordist

Faouzi Thabet

Sound Effects

Philippe Penot

Cast

Ahmed Hedhili

Khedija

Hend Sabri

Alia (young)

Najia Ouerghi

Khalti Hadda

Ghalia Lacroix

Alia (adult)

Sami Bouajila

Lotfi

Kamel Faza

Sidi Ali

Hichem Rostom

Si Béchir

Hélène Catzaras

Fella

Sonia Meddeli

Jneina

Mechet Krifa

Memia

Kamel Touati

Houssine

Fatma Ben Saidane

Mroubia

Zahira Ben Ammar

Habiba

Sabah Bouzouita

Schéma

Bechir Feni

Bey

Khedija Ben Othman

Sarra

Taoufik Bahri

Abdelatif Khireddine

Naoufel Zaghib

Noureddine Annabi

Med Imine Cherif

Med Chedly Star

Rafael Mastier

Alberto Canova

Cristian Chartian

Jalel Ben Saad

Abdelaziz Belgaid

Rachida Ben Rabiaa

Saima Nafsi

Ichraf Azouz

Asma Zouheir

Karima Ajimi

Khaoula Mezzi

Ramia Ayari

Zohra Rafraf

Abdelkerim Toumi

Bey Fazzani

Paula Craft

11,430 feet

127 minutes

In colour

Subtitles

a beautiful servant, refuses to say who Alia's father is. Jneina, who is barren, hates the mother and despises the daughter, but Alia grows up friends with Sarra. Although a servant, she has the run of the house, and everyone seems fond of her. It becomes apparent that she is a fine musician – though Jneina will never let her borrow Sarra's lute – and she gradually realises that Sidi Ali must be her father.

As all prepare for Sarra's arranged engagement to a cousin, the radio announces nationalist disturbances and popular anger towards the royal family for its collaboration with French colonial crackdown. Alia's blooming womanhood attracts the attention of several men in the old Bey's immediate family, and even perhaps Sidi Ali himself, which only increases Jneina's dislike of her. Made aware of the sexual services required of her mother and other servant women, Alia runs out into the gardens, where she spins until she collapses. Si Béchir carries her back to her bed. Khedija happens on them, and Si Béchir rapes her. Alia sees this, and is ill for some time. Only Sarra, playing her lute, can cheer her up. Khedija buys Alia a lute of her own.

Protesters have been surrounding the palace. Meanwhile Lotfi, a young teacher and nationalist intellectual, has been hiding from the police in Khalti Hadda's quarters. Alia begins to fall for him. After she sings in the garden, Sidi Ali asks Khedija that the girl sing for his family, which she does, to Khedija's distress. When Alia returns from singing, Khedija is suddenly taken ill and vomits. Later, Sidi Ali's brother demands that from now on Alia takes him tea in bed. When Khedija appears next time in Alia's place, he forces her to give him a backrub, only relenting when his own mistress arrives. Khedija discovers she is pregnant and arranges with one of the other servants to take a potion to abort the baby. The Bey's family plan to flee to the country until the protests have died down; Alia is expected to go with them, but she doesn't want to. She asks Khedija again who her father was, and then begs her to leave with her. At Sarra's engagement, Alia sings the forbidden nationalist anthem. Meanwhile, Khedija has collapsed – the abortion has gone wrong, and she dies before Alia can come to her.

10 years on, Khalti Hadda laments the silence imposed on the servant women of the palace, while Alia calls to her dead mother to tell her that her life since leaving has been nothing but a series of abortions. Only the child growing within her offers a future.

Moufida Tlatli's prize-winning debut film is slow, and initially somewhat gnostic, but scenes stay sharply in the mind, the detail of the story reducing to something stark and potent. There is great understatement in its depiction of febrile emotional politics blurring into transformative social politics, but the veiled passions seem magnified by the unchangingly shabby stateliness of the rooms in the

Bey's palace. It is also suffused with music: the choked claustrophobia of anachronistic feudal routines is in clear contrast to the subtle spaces and freedoms in the Tunisian melodies. Sidi Ali escapes from his increasingly fatuous and impossible role into his music, and Alia, inheriting his gift, hopes to make music her escape route also. One of the film's most striking achievements is the unobtrusive forward step that the soundtrack makes, from local colour to perilous vector of liberty.

Faced with beives of dark-eyed, dark-haired women of similar social function, we may not always be sure at first who's who (or when flashbacks begin and end); this society is alien terrain, its protocols left implicit. After a while, we grasp the degree to which character and relationship manifest themselves through strict adherence to hierarchy, but the very care we have to take in observing their care fixes images in the mind, highlighting unspoken rigidities within the story's damaged, doomed society. From manicured gardens to airlessly splendid royal chambers, the Bey's palatial home is a mausoleum to uselessness.

By the close, the demure and composed young woman Alia (Ghalia Lacroix dapper in tailored grey suit) is proved ruined within, a ruin Khedija has predicted. Ostensibly the film is about the future wreck of a silent, sensitive, serious but beautiful child by adult men playing perilous cross-class relationship games – games played as compromise within and petty release from an unbending social etiquette they have inwardly lost faith in and aren't have done with. But this device – the quiet child participant in adult self-destruction – makes it sound too like a North African version of *The Godfather*. It's more ambitious and probably better than that (perhaps because it is distinctly allegorical, but more in an imaginatively filmic dimension than some laborious translation from a written source).

The film also shares some of the tight-wound, female ensemble repression of Mario Camus' version of *Lorca's The House of Bernarda Alba*. Despite the similarities, the underlying motor is



Shaded passion: Ghalia Lacroix

not *Bernarda Alba*'s stylised hysteria and sisterly jealousy but rather the habitual practicality and resignation of people who run everything but own nothing. Though the servant women are trapped in their roles, for them the coming change is not entirely unexpected nor unwanted, and servants' quarters' humour and liveliness – the source of the film's most tragically heart-warming moments – is increasingly spiced by dreams of insubordination. Looming disaster is signalled by the drone of the radio slipping the country's mounting chaos into everyone's daily routine, and by the impotent current affairs chatter of members of the Bey's family, whining about the decline of traditional values and the necessity of respect for class. ("Class cannot be seized. It takes generations.") When the disaster comes it is presented as Alia's combined revolt and personal catastrophe, but it also marks the bankruptcy of an ancient system, in which the powerful exploit, betray and destroy those they profess to protect, all the while pimping for colonial France.

Despite the numbers making up this royal household with its not-quite-harem, not a single player is wasted. The solemn cowardice and unacted-on decency of Kamel Faza's Sidi Ali is as memorable as the shallow and unearned haughtiness of Mechet Krifa, playing his sister-in-law Memia – although the two together speak less than a score of words. As Khedija, Amel Hedhili's harried beauty is as striking when she grins girlishly as she is devastating when her grief for the daughter she cannot save without destroying begins to turn to self-hatred. Hend Sabri as the younger Alia is perhaps too often too formlessly watchful – it's understandable in the charged, secretive atmosphere that this unmodelled virginity is more enticing to the blandly corrupt men of the Bey's family than the flirtiness of some of the older women, but it nonetheless sits a little oddly with her sudden adult grasp of complexity and the shaded passion of her singing.

The closing speeches and the framing abortion-as-metaphor are maybe a little heavy-handed: but they're also a measure of Tlatli's unsentimental attitude towards Tunisia after the revolution. Lotfi cannot 'save' Alia, and after shattering a regime with a forbidden song, she wastes her life singing half-heartedly to diners who aren't listening. In the moral fable, Khedija and Alia are Tunisia, let down by their old rulers and the revolutionaries that succeed them, but also – tellingly, and movingly – by their own choices, their unwillingness to challenge convention, and to break silences. Women are not simply pawns of male oppression: the stereotypes of Islamic order are refused even as its inadequacies are exposed. Elegance and sombre maturity are not inevitably virtues in movies, but if you can imagine a feminist *The Godfather Part II* played out on a Paradjanov set, you'll catch some of the courage and imaginative force of this film.

Mark Sinker

Alia is an unsuccessful singer in a fraught non-marriage about to have an abortion. Hearing of the death of Tunisia's last king, the Bey Sidi Ali, she returns to the palace she left ten years before, offers condolences to the Bey's wife, Jneina, then seeks out the old woman Khalti Hadda, who ran the servants' quarters where she grew up. In flashback, we learn why and when Alia left. She was born on the same night as Sarra, daughter of Sidi Ali's brother Si Béchir. Her mother Khedija,

Silent Tongue

USA 1993

Director: Sam Shepard

Certificate
12

Distributor
Entertainment

Production Companies
Belbo Films/Alive Films

Executive Producers
Gene Rosow
Jacques Fansten
Bill Yehraus
Shep Gordon

Producers
Carolyn Pfeiffer
Ludi Boeken

Associate Producer
Catherine Scheinman

Production Co-ordinator
Gina Fortunato

2nd Unit Co-ordinator
Cynthia Hobgood

Unit Production Manager
Michael Bennett

Location Manager
Barbara Simpson

Post-production Supervisor
Michael J. Harker

2nd Unit Director
Bill Yehraus

Assistant Directors
Matt Clark
Robert Lorenz
Patricia Frazier

Casting
Jennifer Shull

Associate:
Elizabeth Shull

Location:
Sally Jackson

Screenplay
Sam Shepard

Script Supervisor
Barbara Tuss

Director of Photography
Jack Conroy

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Michael Anderson

Camera Operators
Chris Hayes
Daniel L. Turrett

Steadicam Operator
Bob Gorelick

Editor
Bill Yehraus

Production Designer
Cary White

Art Directors
John Frick
Michael Sullivan

Set Decorator
Barbara Haberecht

Set Dresser
Shane C. Patrick

Scenic Artists
Ed Vega
Kim Aeby

Special Effects Co-ordinator
John K. Stirber

Costume Design
Van Broughton Ramsey
Jim Echerd

Wardrobe Supervisor
Tanea Lednicki

Make-up/
Special Make-up Effects

David Atherton

Hairstylist
Joani Yarbrough

Titles/Opticals
Visions Productions
Jerry Kitz

Music
Patrick O'Hearn
Medicine Show:
Jack Herrick

Music Performed by
Medicine Show:
The Red Clay Ramblers
Keyboards/Bass:
Patrick O'Hearn
Drums/Perussion:
Terry Bozzio
Kurt Wortman
Sam Shepard
Guitar Ambience:
David Torn
Warren Cuccurullo
Peter Maunu

Woodwinds/Mandolins:
Jack Herrick

Music Producer
Patrick O'Hearn

Songs
"Little Acrobat's Song"
by Tommy Thompson,
Jack Herrick: "The
Three O'Clock Train
Skit", "The Old
Jawbone", "Man of
the House", "The
Saratoga Hornpipe",
"Hell Amongst the
Yearlings", "The
Musical Priest", "The
Earl's Chair", "White
Blanket", "Star of
Donagel", "Flying
Cloud Cotillion",
"The Man at the
Plough", "Oh, Death",
"Haul Away, Joe",
performed by The
Red Clay Ramblers

Supervising Sound Editor
John A. Larsen

Sound Editors
Duncan Burns
John Edwards-Younger
Jerelyn J. Harding
Lauren Palmer
Rodger Pardee
John Joseph Thomas
Raoul

Production Sound Mixer
Susumu Tokunow

ADR Mixer
Charleen Richards

Foley Mixer
Randy Singer

Sound Recordists
Mark Harris
Gregory Steele

Music:
Patrick O'Hearn

Music Mixers
Richard McIlvery
James McIlvery

Dolby stereo consultant:
Steve Smith

Sound Re-recording Mixers
Matthew Iadarola
Gary Gegan

Sound Transfers
Tim Jones

Foley Artists
Dan O'Connell
Gary Hecker

ADR Group Co-ordinator
Leigh French

Stunt Co-ordinator
Dutch Lunak

King of the Cowboys
Rusty Hendrickson

Horse Trainer
Rex Peterson

Cast
Richard Harris
Prescott Roe
Sheila Tousey
Awbonnie/Ghost
Alan Bates
Eamon McCree
River Phoenix
Talbot Roe
Dermot Mulroney
Reeves McCree
Jeri Arredondo
Velada McCree
Tantoo Cardinal
Silent Tongue
Bill Irwin
Comic
David Shiner
Straight Man
The Red Clay Ramblers:
Tommy Thompson
Jack Herrick
Bland Simpson
Clay Buckner
Chris Frank
Medicine Show Band
Performers

Arturo Gil
Joseph Grillo
Little People Acrobats
Billy Beck
Petrified Man
Phillip Attmore
Tap Dancer
Al Lujan
Kiowa Drummer
Devino Tricocche
Fire Eater
April Tatro
Contortionist
Tim Carroll
Stage Coach Driver
Nicholas Ortiz Y Pino
Young Reeves
Robert Harnsberger
Buffalo Hunter
Fred Maio
Owner

David E. Wynne
Sky Fabin
Leslie Flemming
Easterners
Jill Momaday
Prostitute
Lynn Davis
Prairie Girl
Tim Scott
Lone Man

9,129 feet
101 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Deluxe
Anamorphic

The American prairies sometime in the 1870s. Horse dealer Prescott Roe comes looking for Eamonn MacRee, a drunken mountebank who runs a bizarre travelling medicine show. The previous year Prescott swapped three horses for MacRee's half-Indian daughter, Awbonnie. She married Prescott's son, Talbot, but died in childbirth. Now, Prescott wants to barter for her twin sister, Velada, in the hope she'll be able to assuage Talbot's all-consuming grief. Upbraided by his son Reeves, MacRee refuses to make an immediate sale. In desperation, Prescott kidnaps Velada and rides off with her towards the wilderness where Talbot is mounting 24 hour vigil over Awbonnie's corpse. In a nightmare, MacRee remembers how he once raped an outcast Kiowa Indian, Silent Tongue, (so called because the Indians ripped out her tongue for lying). He married her, and she gave birth to Velada and Awbonnie, but then fled back to her tribe. He is woken by his son, Reeves, who insists they go in pursuit of the kidnapper. Velada manages to escape from Prescott. Rather than desert him, she strikes a deal. In exchange for horses and money she will try to ease Talbot out of his grief. Awbonnie's furious spirit is tormenting Talbot. She wants her corpse to be buried or burned so she will be free to leave for the spirit land, but he can't bring himself to let her go. Spotting Indians on the horizon and convinced they've been sent by Silent Tongue to punish him, MacRee shoots his mules, hides behind them and lets rip with his rifle. They ride off. He follows Reeves on foot, but is later abandoned by him.

Prescott hides as Velada approaches Talbot. She manages to make him eat. Awbonnie's ghost lets loose the horses and sets a hawk on Prescott. He is possessed by her spirit and eventually hurls her corpse on the fire, freeing her to fly off to the spirit world. The Indians capture MacRee and march through the desert, torturing him with their lances. Prescott and Talbot are last seen hobbling wearily together into the distance.

Sam Shepard's second film as director is a bleak, ritualistic western which owes as much to Aeschylus as to John Ford. Nemesis comes not in the shape of a gun-toting cowboy, but as a force of nature, the equivalent

of the 'fury' in Greek Tragedy whose inexorable hounding of the protagonist is set in motion by his guilt and grief. Right from the opening scene, as River Phoenix mounts a vigil over the corpse of his dead Indian wife, the story is given a supernatural dimension. The earth is parched. Bones and feathers litter the ground. Ominous birds of prey hover in an all-too-blue sky. With this kind of landscape, it's scarcely a surprise that formal realism is often abandoned and that a vengeful ghost is at the core of the narrative.

Despite its sometimes ponderous mysticism, *Silent Tongue* also has a clear political agenda. If not exactly a revisionist western, the film records at least obliquely how Native Americans in general, and their women in particular, were persecuted by the terrified white man. The title refers to the story of a Kiowa Indian who has her tongue ripped out for lying, but her brutal punishment at the hands of her own people is nothing to the way she and her daughters are treated by the new settlers. Their bodies are bartered for horses, their myths plundered to provide the travelling medicine show with comic sketches. ("It's the primitive that feeds my livelihood," explains MacRee, the Irish mountebank who rapes Silent Tongue and sells her children for livestock.)

Shepard is not given to grand statements. His primary focus is on traumatised individuals within a broken family. As the wrinkled, weather-bitten horse trader, Prescott Roe, who emerges like some latterday prophet out of the dusty prairies, Richard Harris isn't so far removed from Travis in *Paris, Texas*. His son's wake by his dead wife's corpse recalls Jake's tormented obsession with Beth in *A Lie Of The Mind*. As a piece of writing, though, *Silent Tongue* is a notch or two beneath the standard of Shepard's best work. It is short on the memorable monologues that are his trademark. Some of the characters, notably Alan Bates' drunken Irish medicine peddler and Tantoo Cardinal's Silent Tongue, are more exaggerated archetypes than fully hewn individuals. The story sometimes seems as strained and as one-

dimensional as the eerie little comic masques the medicine show presents. Shepard seems to be trying to express in images what he would normally be able to convey through dialogue alone. In the case of most directors, this would hardly warrant as a criticism. With Shepard, however, the strain of reaching for a visual language drags the picture under the weight of heavy-handed symbolism. *Mise en scène* is often cluttered: the travelling medicine show comes complete with camels, horses, dwarves, clowns, skulls and living Christ-like statues, none of which serve any narrative function whatsoever. The black and white flashback sequence in which MacRee chases Silent Tongue over a skeleton-littered desert ends with an all too predictable silent scream. Amid this welter of overblown imagery, it is little wonder that Shepard's cast are in hyperbolic mode. As the grief-stricken husband, River Phoenix comes on like Simon of the Desert, rolling his eyeballs. Alan Bates is all drunken blarney. Dermot Mulroney, his hot-tempered son, merely sneers like a disaffected adolescent.

One of Shepard's most celebrated roles as a screen actor was in *Days Of Heaven*, and the experience of working with Terrence Malick and Nestor Almendros has obviously affected his own approach to film-making. The way he shoots the denuded landscapes in natural light, his enthusiasm for roseate dawns and dusks, even the circus troupe itself might have been borrowed from Malick's film.

Even as classical revenge drama, *Silent Tongue* falls slightly short. The bloody finale described in the production notes doesn't actually occur, and the story whimpers out with Harris and Phoenix cast adrift in the wilderness. Although his work has been filmed successfully by Antonioni, Altman and Wenders, Shepard is still feeling his way as a film-maker. Here, his attempt at meshing western myth, Greek tragedy and family psychodrama together ends up an unwieldy mess. Shepard will surely one day make a movie which does him justice as both writer and director, but this isn't it.

Geoffrey Macnab



Indian giver: Alan Bates

Star Trek: Generations

USA 1994

Director: David Carson

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount Pictures

Executive Producer

Bernie Williams

Producer

Rick Berman

Co-producer

Peter Lauritsen

Production Supervisor

Michelle Wright

Production Co-ordinator

Kelley Wood

Unit Production Managers

Bernie Williams

Robert Grand

Location Manager

Christine Bonnem

Pre-production Supervisor

Lolita Fatjo

Assistant Directors

Yudi Bennett

Chris Soldo

David Silverberg

Arlene Fukai

Casting

Junie Lowry-Johnson

Ron Surma

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Ronald D. Moore

Brannon Braga

Story

Rick Berman

Ronald D. Moore

Brannon Braga

Based on 'Star Trek'

created by Gene

Roddenberry

Script Supervisor

Judi Brown

Director of Photography

John A. Alonzo

Miniature Crash Sequence

Director of Photography

Kim Marks

Camera Operators

Pernell Youngblood

Tyus

Krishna Rao

Steadicam Operator

George J. Billinger III

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light &

Magic

Supervisor:

John Knoll

Santa Barbara Studios

Supervisor:

John Grower

Producer:

Bruce Jones

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Ronald B. Moore

Co-Supervisor:

Alex Seiden

Producers:

Roni McKinley

C. Marie Davis

Co-ordinators:

Alia Almeida Agha

Ginger Theisen

Editors:

Karey Maltzahn

Michael McGovern

Camera Operator:

Patrick Sweeney

Art Director:

Bill George

Miniature Crash Sequence

Optical Supervisor

Bruce Vecchitto

Digital Matte Artists

Bill Mather

Yusei Uesugi

Computer Imaging

Creative Supervisor:

Joni Jacobson

Supervisor:

Dawn Guinta

Computer Graphics

Sequence Supervisor:

Bart Giovannetti

Supervisor:

John Schlag

Artists:

Joel Aron

Barbara Brennan

Donald S. Butler

Rob Coleman

Scott Frankel

Peg Hunter

Henry LaBounta

Stewart W. Lew

Mary McCulloch

Pat Myers

Barbara L. Nellis

Doug Smythe

Ben Snow

Laurence Treweek

Dennis Turner

Habib Zargarpour

Digital Compositing

Supervisor:

Don Lee

Steve Bowen

Danny Mudgett

Associates:

Ernie Camacho

Selena Cornish

Lenny Forher

Artists:

Peter Koczera

Andrew Mumford

Larry Gaynor

Gregory Oehler

Editor:

John Bartle

Production Co-

ordination:

Tripp Hudson

Animation

Supervisor:

Eric Guaglione

Animators:

Ron Moreland

Mark Wendell

Will Rivera

Chalermpon 'Yo'

Poungpeth

Editor

Peter E. Berger

Production Designer

Herman Zimmerman

Art Director

Sandy Veneziano

Set Design

Robert Fechtman

Ron Wilkinson

Dianne Wager

Set Decorator

John M. Dwyer

Illustrator

John Eaves

Scenic Artists

Supervisor:

Michael H. Okuda

Denise Okuda

Alan Kobayashi

Anthony Fredrickson

Doug Drexler

Models

Supervisor:

John Goodson

Department

Supervisor:

Jeff Olson

Chief Model Makers:

Lorne Peterson

Jon Foreman

Larry Tan

Steve Gawley

Brian Gernand

Model Makers:

Mark Anderson

Charlie Bailey

Michael Cummins

Giovanni Donovan

Nelson Hall

Michael Lynch

Scott McNamara

Richard Miller

Chris Reed

Kim Smith

Tony Sommers

Steve Walton

Special Effects

Terry D. Frazee

Costume Design

Robert Blackman

Costume Supervisor

Elena del Rio

Make-up

June Haymore

Gil Mosko

Debbie Zoller

Special Make-up Effects

Michael Westmore

Hairstylist

Key:

Joy A. Zapata

Carolyn L. Elias

Patricia Miller

Laura Connolly

Title Design

Dan Curry

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

Dennis McCarthy

Music Conductor

Dennis McCarthy

Orchestrations

Mark McKenzie

William Ross

Brad Warnaar

Dennis Yurosek

Music Preparation

Bob Bornstein

Music Editor

Stephen M. Rowe

Supervising Sound Editor

James W. Livingston

Supervising Dialogue Editor

Joseph A. Ippolito

Dialogue Editors

Raoul

Gloria d'Alessandro

Richard Corwin

Supervising ADR Editor

Becky Sullivan

ADR Editors

Nicholas Korda

Lee Lemont

ADR Mixer

Bob Baron

Supervising Foley Editor

Pamela Bentkowsky

Foley Editors

James Likowski

Jeffrey R. Payne

Foley Mixer

Randy Singer

Music Scoring Mixer

Robert Fernandez

Re-recording Mixers

Chris Jenkins

Mark Smith

Adam Jenkins

Sound Effects Editors

Masanobu 'Tomi'

Tomita

Jon E. Johnson

Sean P. Callery

Jeffrey L. Sandler

Foley Artists

Ken Dufva

David Lee Fein

Technical Supervisors

Bill Feightner

Richard Moc

Stunt Co-ordinator

Bud Davis

Horse Wrangler

Denny Allan

Cast

Patrick Stewart

Picard

Jonathan Frakes

Riker

Brent Spiner

Data

Levar Burton

Geordi

Michael Dorn

Worf

Gates McFadden

Beverly

Marina Sirtis

Troi

Malcolm McDowell

Soran

James Doohan

Scotty

Walter Koenig

Chekov

William Shatner

Kirk

Whoopi Goldberg

Guinan

Alan Ruck

Capt. Harriman

Jacqueline Kim

Demora

Jenette Goldstein

Science Officer

Thomas Kopache

Com Officer

◀ "is real freedom!"), it is difficult to interpret them as any kind of menace – particularly as the problems of the galaxies, one long round of warfare and planetary disintegration, evidently can be put on hold until one is ready to go and deal with them. A reversal might even be implicit whereby the Nexus, with its Christmas parties and its exuberant bouts of equestrianism, is the only true reality while the Klingons, or a berserk Malcolm McDowell, or all the capricious Starfleet executives put together, are mere figments of the fevered imagination, on no account to be taken seriously.

The durability of *Star Trek*, as Roddenberry always maintained, is a matter not so much of the ingenuity with which emergencies of an incalculable scale are coolly solved on a weekly basis, but of an underlying odyssey, complete with sirens, whirlpools, and dragon's teeth, in which the officers of the *Enterprise* wrestle with themselves, duty and mortality at constant odds. In *Star Trek: Generations* the issues are achingly of human-ness: sacrifice, joy, humour, belonging and the cruel penalties for self-indulgence. From Kirk's bemused recognition that he is only again on the starship's bridge as a PR exercise, to Picard's imagined and heartrendingly unreachable family, the two Captains live an inner life which, to an audience that has known them for years, is uniquely accessible from the slightest of hints. Family, in fact, is the essence of the attraction: the dedicated Trekkie occupies a dimension of *Generations* unknown to the casual observer in which the whereabouts of family members Sulu or Uhura or Wesley are matters of inescapable parallel conjecture.

What the Nexus is sadly unlikely to achieve is the return of a less mature *Enterprise* contingent from the early years. Already multi-wrinkled in *The Undiscovered Country*, what is left of the original unit is now creaking somewhat; in this sense, the death of Kirk marks an inevitable valediction. Nicely judged by Shatner, the final improvisation is both characteristically fey and affectingly memorable, despite the tawdry surroundings (the first version took him out by laser-blast but the fans complained). It marks the end of the Roddenberry era with at least an adequate dignity, while the exchanges between Shatner and the ageless Patrick Stewart, a fascinating duel between levity and authority, produce admirable performances at both extremes. And if the 'humanisation' of Data, a well-worn theme of the *Next Generation* episodes, is given excessive screen time while Beverly and a fetchingly revamped Deanna get rather too little, the spectacular aspects of the screenplay are handled with daunting skill by newcomer David Carson, clearly well prepared by his television apprenticeship. The sequence of the *Enterprise* top section saucer into a crash-landing on an alien planet is as glorious as anyone, Trekkie or not, could wish for.

Philip Strick

NFT FIRST RUN

The Heroic Trio (Dongfang San Xia)

Hong Kong 1992

Director: Johnny To (Du Qifeng)

Certificate

Not Yet Issued

Distributor

Made in Hong Kong

Production Companies

China Entertainment

Films/Paka Hill

productions

Executive Producer

Zheng Jianping

Producer

Ching Siu-Tung

(Cheng Xiaodong)

Associate Producers

Brian Yip (Ye Subang)

Zheng Jianmei

Production Managers

Catherine Ta

(Ta Jiazhen)

Chen Peihua

Assistant Directors

Lao Jianhua

Raymond Cheng

(Zheng Ziwei)

Screenplay

Sandy Shaw (Shao

Liqiong)

Directors of Photography

Poon Hang-Sang

Tom Lau

Editor

Kam Wah Productions

Art Director

Bruce Yu (Yu Jia'an)

Set Design

Raymond Chan

(Chen Jinhe)

Special Effects

Video:

Bai Le

Model:

3000cc Productions

Make-up

Wen Xianling

Zheng Fengyan

Hairstylists

Li Lianti

Wu Yuhao

Music

William Hu (Hu Weili)

Sound Effects

Wu Guohua

Cantonese Soundtrack

Supervisor

Zhao Linzhi

Action Choreographer

Ching Siu-Tung

(Cheng Xiaodong)

Cast

Anita Mui (Mei Yanfang)

Tung, Wonder Woman

Maggie Cheung

(Zhang Manyu)

Chat, Thief Catcher

Michelle Yeoh

(Yang Ziqiong)

Ching, Invisible

Woman

Damian Lau (Liu Songren)

Inspector Lau

Paul Chin (Qin Pei)

Chief of Police

James Pak (Bai Shiqian)

Inventor

RenShiguan

Evil Master

Anthony Wong

(Huang Qiusheng)

Kau

Zhu Mimi

Jiang Naowen

Xu Tao

Ruan Zhaoxiang

Huang Yifei

Chen Zhuxin

Li Zhaoji

Zheng Ruisheng

7,380 feet

82 minutes

In colour

Cantonese Version

Subtitles



To catch a thief: Maggie Cheung

the open, but accidentally causes the death of another baby; Ching recognises Chat as a refugee from the service of her evil master, and warns her not to intervene. Undeterred, Chat penetrates the master's caves and gets the better of his meathead guard Kau before being struck by a poison dart. Her life is saved by Tung's meta-medical skills and the two women agree to team up to defeat the villain. Their first challenge is to subdue Kau, who is causing mayhem at the railway station. Inspector Lau is injured in the fracas.

Ching meanwhile discovers that her boyfriend is dying from the toxic side-effects of his research and decides to kill herself, but Tung saves her life, rekindling their childhood friendship and reawakening her buried humanity. Now a team of three, the women find Kau at the inventor's lab and manage to trick him into jumping into a furnace. The evil master, however, is harder to overcome: he follows them up from his caves to the city streets, survives an explosion as a vicious ambient skeleton and takes possession of Ching's body to continue the fight. He is ultimately thwarted only by Ching's willingness to sacrifice herself for the good of humanity. The babies are recovered. Questioned by the media about the episode, Inspector Lau dubs the three superheroines "The Heroic Trio".

Amazingly, Johnny To and Ching Siu-Tung promoted *The Heroic Trio* on first release as a ground-breaking novelty for Hong Kong cinema. At the time, admittedly, Ching was trying to extricate himself from the aegis of Tsui Hark and establish himself as a major player in his own right, while To was making an overdue pitch to be accepted as one of Hong Kong's leading directors of action adventures. But the film itself is almost defiantly unoriginal. It's one of many recent Chinese live-action comic strips to pick up where Tim Burton's version of *Batman* left off; like *Saviour of the Soul* (the best example of the type), it pillages Japanese manga and four decades of Chinese pop culture to freshen up its countless borrowings from Hollywood. The result plays like an anthology: ideas and images from Walter Hill, Tim Burton and Luc Besson meet the drag queen villain from Ching Siu-Tung's own *Chinese Ghost Story*, 'weightless' action choreography from the King Hu tradi-

tion and the bizarre flying guillotine last seen in Shaw Brothers quickies of the early 70s. The overall retro-futurist ambience evokes happy memories of Kirk Wong's *Health Warning* (Da Leitai, 1983), but *The Heroic Trio* predictably takes none of that film's risks.

Johnny To was one of the many young Hong Kong directors who made the transition from television to filmmaking at the end of the 70s, and his first feature *The Enigmatic Case* (Bishui Hanshan Duoming Jin, 1980) suggested a talent to rival Tsui Hark's. But the freshness of his approach to age-old Chinese genres was quickly cauterised by the system, which soon had him churning out formula movies. The best known of them, *The Barefoot Kid* (Chijiao Xiaozai, released two months after *The Heroic Trio* to even worse box-office), was a nostalgic recreation of old Shaw-style programme pictures. The appearance here of To's favourite actor Damian Lau (star of *The Enigmatic Case*) is a forlorn evocation of the career that To might have had.

Still, the film offers a number of simple pleasures. Its design and *mise en scène* are expansive and occasionally exhilarating, and it has the good sense to intersperse scenes of would-be pathos between its action set-pieces. Anita Mui and Maggie Cheung approach their iconic roles with gusto and deliver the odd camp frisson, although Michelle Yeoh (previously known as Michelle Khan) seems dispirited from start to finish. There are a couple of moments of genuine horror-comic poetry, both rooted in black humour. The villain's chief heavy Kau (played by Anthony Wong, elsewhere an actor of some sophistication) is a snarling, wordless meathead who examines his own severed finger with bemusement before eating it; and there are two glimpses of the villain's tribe of heavies-in-training, boys rejected from the quest for a future puppet emperor, nurtured as cannibals and denied both speech and thought. These kids are eventually massacred by Chat (who justifies it as a humane act), and the film underlines their blind panic with close-ups of them involuntarily urinating. Such moments of Lautreamont-esque intensity suggest that the film could have been ten times darker, and perhaps even as original as its makers claimed.

Tony Rayns

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VIDEO

Mark Kermode and Peter Dean highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE



Never forget: Spielberg's Oscar-winning film

Schindler's List

Director Steven Spielberg/USA 1993

Spielberg's adaptation of Thomas Keneally's acclaimed book about survivors of the Holocaust, earned him a long overdue Oscar, and benefits from a fine screenplay by Steven Zaillian and an extraordinary supporting performance from Ralph Fiennes. Shot in atmospheric black-and-white, it suffers on full-screen

video from intrusive frame-cropping – frequently characters are pushed to the side of the screen and the sombre landscape (which cameraman Janusz Kaminski strove hard to realise) is belittled. A widescreen version is planned for the sell-through release which should prove more rewarding viewing. (S&S March 1994)
● Rental: Universal VHA 1748; B/W; Certificate 15



Confronting ghosts: Geir Westby as Edvard Munch

Edvard Munch

Director Peter Watkins/Norway/Sweden 1976

First-rate biography about the Norwegian artist. The film – a mix of quasi-documentary and period drama – details Munch's early years and the numerous tragedies which shaped his vision, including the death of his mother and sister, his brother's suicide, a complicated affair with a married woman, and his constant battle against insanity. Munch's

unpublished diaries, written in a disjointed style, are read by Peter Watkins (*The War Game*, *Culloden*), and seem to hold personal resonance for the director. An engrossing film, without the longueurs of *La Belle noiseuse*, which uncovers the world of the great Expressionist. This version is taken from the US print of 167 minutes – the British television version is 43 minutes longer. (MFB No. 532)
● Retail: Academy CAV 019; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate PG

When the Party's Over

Director Matthew Irmas/USA 1991

The teen-torment drama comes of age. After sitting on a distributor's shelf for a couple of years, this exemplary look at romantic wranglings finally surfaces, boosted by the recent success of actress Sandra Bullock (*Speed*). Bullock is excellent, but the real surprise is Rae Dawn Chong who turns in an emotionally engaging performance. Credit is due to Ann Wycoff whose screenplay intelligently and provocatively gets under the skin of the characters, and Irmas' ability to direct with equal confidence and control the erotic charge of a first kiss as well as the repugnant horror of a date rape. Something of a find, and unmissable for anyone with a penchant for philosophical, heavyweight, romantic comedy.

● Rental Premiere: First Independent VA 20226; Certificate 15; 110 minutes; Producers Ann Wycoff, James A. Holt, Matthew Irmas; Screenplay Ann Wycoff; Lead Actors Sandra Bullock, Rae Dawn Chong, Fisher Stevens, Elizabeth Berridge, Kris Kamm

Against the Wall

Director John Frankenheimer/USA 1993

In this gritty, historical drama, Frankenheimer takes an admirable stab at the significance of the Attica prison uprising. Set against a backdrop of political turmoil (the Vietnam war, domestic racial tension, campus insurgencies) which haunted America during the late 60s and early 70s, *Against the Wall* follows the fortunes of former liberal-turned-rookie-warden, Kyle MacLachlan, and hard-bitten inmate activist Samuel L. Jackson (*Pulp Fiction*), as Attica is taken over by rioting prisoners. There is an added poignancy considering the recent scandals regarding the state of British and American prisons, and the message that penal reform is urgently needed is conveyed without resorting to crass polemicising.

● Rental Premiere: 20.20 Vision NVT 22938; Certificate 18; 106 minutes; Producer Steven McGlothen; Screenplay Ron Hutchinson; Lead Actors Samuel L. Jackson, Kyle MacLachlan, Harry Dean Stanton, Clarence Williams III



Rebels: Kyle MacLachlan, Samuel L. Jackson



Life and soul: Buñuel's banned film

Viridiana

Director Luis Buñuel/Spain/Mexico 1961

The Franco government invited Buñuel back after 25 years exile in Mexico to make this film. Ironically, *Viridiana* was subsequently banned in Spain, and, even after winning the Palme d'Or in 1961, the director was threatened by the Italian authorities with imprisonment. This scathing look at the role of the Church in contemporary Spain still shocks, particularly in the blisteringly cruel final half. *Viridiana* (Silvia Pinal) is a novice who arrives at a run-down estate to see her last remaining relative, an uncle (Fernando Rey), who involves her in fetishistic rituals. After her uncle commits suicide, *Viridiana* seeks penance by inviting homeless people to the estate, who eventually run riot. The pastiche of *The Last Supper*, set to Handel's 'Messiah', by any standards is an extraordinary piece of film-making. (MFB No. 340)

● Retail: Electric Pictures E-071; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate 15

Le Cri du Hibou

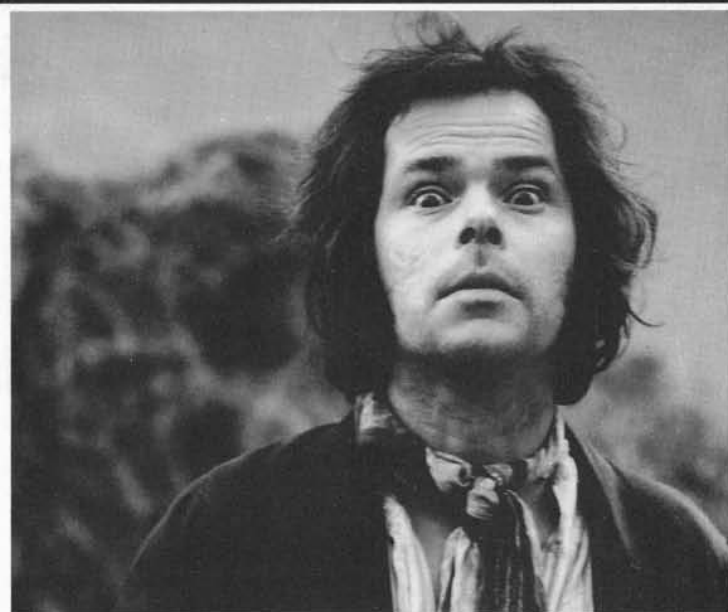
Director Claude Chabrol/France/Italy 1987

Suspenseful, relatively unknown Chabrol film, which explores the destructive nature of relationships. A depressive draughtsman (Christophe Malavoy), seeking escape from his vindictive wife, spends his evenings either painting birds or spying on a young woman. A liaison with his object of desire results in a complex web of blackmail and murder. This modern film noir, based on a Patricia Highsmith novel, for the most part shows Chabrol at his best – boosted by an economical plot littered with Hitchcockian motifs. However, the final half descends into melodrama, and the style seems at odds with the wild lurches of the narrative. Nevertheless, this is still a treat.

● Retail Premiere: Lighthouse LUM 2209; Price £14.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 104 minutes; Producer Antonio Passalia; Screenplay Odile Barski, Claude Chabrol; Lead Actors Christophe Malavoy, Mathilda May, Jacques Penot



Strange desires: Chabrol's modern film noir



Silent madness: Bruno S. as Kaspar Hauser

The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser (Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle)

Director Werner Herzog/West Germany 1974

Herzog's best film to date is a hypnotic meditation on social conventions seen through the eyes of the mysterious Kaspar Hauser, a man found in a town square unable to speak. Hauser exhibits a child-like logic as he learns to communicate, cutting through the repressive mores of the nineteenth-

century world around him. After becoming a local celebrity, his life is suddenly ended by an anonymous assailant. Herzog based this on a true story, but unlike David Lynch's *The Elephant Man*, which focused on the physical disabilities of John Merrick, he is more concerned with holding up a mirror to a hypocritical society. Aka *Every Man for Himself and God Against All*, *The Mystery of Kaspar Hauser*. (MFB No. 503)

● Retail: Tartan Video TVT 1207; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 15



Man alone: Jack Nicholson

Wolf

Director Mike Nichols/USA 1994

Jack Nicholson's first return to the big-budget horror genre since *The Shining*, is a strange affair which pulls in two directions. Scriptwriter Jim Harrison seems fascinated by the strength of character that turning into a werewolf gives to formerly meek publisher Will Randall (Nicholson), while director Nichols appears more concerned with the loss of Randall's humanity. The result is a changeable, but solidly enjoyable hotch-potch, which shifts between satire, shocks and silliness. Nicholson is recklessly enjoyable as the worm who turns, Michelle Pfeiffer, as Randall's forbidden love, adds a touch of class, but top marks go to James Spader as a slimy executive who gets his comeuppance. (S&S September 1994)

● Rental: 20.20 Vision NVT 18647; Certificate 15



Urban cowboy: Mickey Rourke

F.T.W.

Director Michael Karbelnikoff/USA 1994

The publicity for this moody B-movie makes misjudged comparisons with Quentin Tarantino, when, in fact, *F.T.W.* is far closer to Jim McBride's *Breathless*. Fresh out of prison, wannabe cowboy Frank T. Wells (Mickey Rourke) teams up with feisty loner Scarlett (Lori Singer) whose 'F.T.W.' tattoo stands not for Frank's initials, but for 'Fuck The World'. On the run from a failed bank heist and a recently deceased abusive brother, Scarlett hitches her wagon to Frank's rodeo dreams, but the couple's criminal past threatens to catch them up. Featuring a decent performance from Rourke (the first in years), this is charming nonsense with enough doomed romanticism to satisfy pulp connoisseurs. Singer lends an endearing, boyish charm (although the risible spa sex scenes reduce her to a pouting adornment), and, in a cameo treat, Peter Berg pops up as Scarlett's homicidal brother.

● Rental Premiere: Medusa MC 422; Certificate 18; 97 minutes; Producer Tom Mickel; Screenplay Mari Kornhauser; Lead Actors Mickey Rourke, Lori Singer, Brian James, Rodney Grant, Peter Berg



Deceptive memories: Emma Suárez

The Red Squirrel (La ardilla roja)

Director Julio Medem/Spain 1993

Medem, the director of *Vacas*, again displays visual flair in this intriguing psychological thriller. Jota, a suicidal, failed rock musician, rescues a woman after a motorbike crash who seems to be suffering from amnesia. At the hospital, he claims to be her boyfriend and gives her the name of 'Lisa'. But his lies are exposed when Lisa's husband makes an

emotional appeal on the radio for news of her whereabouts. Medem's talent lies in addressing questions of sexual and cultural identity without appearing heavy-handed. The plot resembles a Chinese puzzle, and the emphasis is on the narrative as the characters become caught up in their invented histories. A film that feels like it could – and often does – shoot off in any direction it pleases. (S&S October 1994)

● Retail: Tartan Video TVT 1183; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 18

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

The Air Up There

Director Paul Michael Glaser; USA 1993; Hollywood Pictures 925462; Certificate PG Limp sports movie, directed with none of the panache of former actor Glaser's previous outings behind the camera. An assistant basketball coach (Kevin Bacon) travels to the African town of Winabi to recruit an extremely tall young player to save his American college team. Very dull (S&S July 1994)

Angie

Director Martha Coolidge; USA 1994; Hollywood Pictures D925562; Certificate 15 Martha Coolidge's sentimental but engaging adaptation of Avra Wing's novel *Angie, I Says*, is carried by Geena Davis' rollicking performance as a sassy New Yorker torn between tradition and freedom. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Angie escapes into the arms of an alluring lawyer (Stephen Rea) when she realises her future prospects are diminished after becoming pregnant to her blue-collar boyfriend. Jerry Goldsmith adds extra saccharine with a pleasantly tooth-rotting score. (S&S July 1994)

Baby's Day Out

Director Patrick Read Johnson; USA 1994; FoxVideo 8639; Certificate PG Writer/producer John Hughes serves up an uninspiring dish made more palatable by the grizzled presence of Joe Mantegna who suffers a catalogue of indignities with aplomb. A young toddler, kidnapped by incompetent crooks, escapes and wreaks havoc on the streets of Chicago. Technical screen wizardry provides some enjoyable scenes, with the baby merrily crawling across a busy highway and dangling from skyscrapers. (S&S September 1994)

Bad Girls

Director Jonathan Kaplan; USA 1994; FoxVideo 8627; Certificate 15 Ludicrous japes abound in Kaplan's high camp revisiting of the *High Chaparral*, as four Hollywood starlets strap on leather chaps and gunbelts. Various wronged, the outlaws take to the hills, seeking revenge on the men who robbed them of their birthrights. Silly and far less taboo-breaking than it could have been, this nonetheless provides belly-laughs. (S&S July 1994) □

Beverly Hills Cop III

Director John Landis; USA 1994; Paramount VHB 2984; Certificate 15 Remember when Eddie Murphy joked tastelessly about how small the chances were of him working again with John Landis. Well, it seems the hatchet has been buried, as the pair team up oncemore in a dull sequel. Detective Axel Foley tracks big league crime to an amusement park. (S&S July 1994)



In search: 'Geronimo'

Brainscan

Director John Flynn; USA 1994; Guild G 8780; Certificate 15

A promising sci-fi/horror crossover which falls into the usual traps of computer games/virtual reality movies – most notably, a failure to distinguish and mediate between fiction and reality. A young boy (Edward Furlong) is pursued by The Trickster inside the murderous world of an enigmatic, electronic game. John Flynn adds visual style and panache to the otherwise disappointing proceedings. (S&S November 1994)

Getting Even with Dad

Director Howard Deutch; USA 1994; MGM/UA V054728; Certificate PG Unwanted brat Timmy Gleason (Macaulay Culkin) is left in the care of his errant father (Ted Danson), a long-time thief on the brink of one last job. Timmy stoops to blackmailing his father in an attempt to win attention. An appalling movie, even by Culkin's standards. (S&S August 1994)

Geronimo: An American Legend

Director Walter Hill; USA 1994; Columbia TriStar CVT 19873; Certificate 18 Laudable, serious retelling of the legend about the untameable Apache chief Geronimo, co-scripted by John Milius,

which lacks the explosive visual impact of the director's finest work. Wes Studi is excellent as Geronimo and Gene Hackman and Robert Duvall lend solid support, but the strength of Lloyd Ahern's cinematography is diminished on video, as is the spine-tingling effect of Ry Cooder's score. (S&S November 1994)

The Innocent

Director John Schlesinger; UK/Germany 1993; EV EVV 1294; Certificate 15

This adaptation of Ian McEwan's novel about love and intrigue, is an impressive, atmospheric work, despite somewhat clumsy nods toward *Casablanca*. Political suspicion and military espionage haunt a doomed love affair during the Cold War in Eastern Europe. Fine acting by Campbell Scott and Anthony Hopkins (hindered only by a faltering American accent) complement a magically enigmatic performance from Isabella Rossellini. (S&S August 1994)

Love and Human Remains

Director Denys Arcand; Canada 1993; PolyGram PG 1028; Certificate 18 An odd mixture of satirical comment and misguided, perverse murder mystery from cult Canadian director Arcand. In the emotionally moribund 90s, ex-lovers David (Thomas Gibson) and Candy (Ruth Marshall) work out personal differences, while an acquaintance is suspected of serial murder. The overall effect is disjointed, but kinky Mia Kirshner adds spice. (S&S August 1994)

Mr Jones

Director Mike Figgis; USA 1994; 20.20 Vision NVT 14599; Certificate 18 Heavily re-edited by the studio against Figgis' wishes this tale of a manic-depressive's mood swings has been turned into little more than an odd-ball romantic comedy with only hints of madness remaining. Unsurprisingly, Figgis disowned the film, but Richard Gere (whose central performance is engagingly fruity) retained a fondness for it. Nonsense, but there are glimpses of what might have been. (S&S October 1994)

North

Director Rob Reiner; USA 1994; Guild G8777; Certificate PG

A surprising flop from the usually reliable Reiner, full of pompous meaning and lacking in coherence or wit. Disenchanted by his bickering parents, do-good child North (Elijah Wood) goes globe-trotting in search of a new mother and father, watched over by chameleon-like Bruce Willis. (S&S August 1994)

RoboCop 3

Director Fred Dekker; USA 1992; Columbia TriStar CVT 12813; Certificate 15 Not a patch on Verhoeven's *RoboCop*, but writer/director Fred Dekker's long delayed third instalment is far superior to the dreadful *RoboCop 2*. Brandishing an up-front social conscience (homelessness is a result of evil capitalism), *RoboCop 3* finds our man in the can teaming up with the outlaws to defend Detroit. (S&S July 1994)

Wyatt Earp

Director Lawrence Kasdan; USA 1994; Warner VO13177; Certificate 15 Hot on the heels of *Tombstone*, Kasdan's weighty Western documents the life of Wyatt Earp (Kevin Costner) and his cohort, Doc Holliday (Dennis Quaid). Costner delivers a strong performance, but the story is stolen by Quaid as the disease-ridden Holliday. Kasdan directs the inevitable 'showdown at the OK Corral' scene with dramatic efficiency, but lacks the discipline to reign in this three hour magnum opus. (S&S September 1994) □

Rental premiere

Airborne

Director Rob Bowman; USA 1993; EV EVV 1274; Certificate PG; 86 minutes; Producers Bill Davey, Stephen McEveety; Screenplay Bill Apatlaza; Lead Actors Shane McDermott, Seth Green, Brittney Powell Formulaic teen drama, worth watching for numerous nail-biting rollerblade



Reliving the past: Isabella Rossellini in 'The Innocent'

PRIVATE VIEW

Film-maker Alex Cox on the contradictory world of Luis Buñuel

Bug-eyed Buñuel

Last year, in a small Spanish town, I brought some 29 peseta stamps in a post office – and guess whose face was on them? None other than the mad, bug-eyed, pencil-moustached Luis Buñuel. Now, it's not easy to get on a postage stamp – unless you're an angel, a snowman, or a reigning monarch – but what is even more impressive about the Buñuel stamps is that during his life the great surrealist film-maker was virtually proscribed in Spain. It was inevitable, of course. Not even the current NATO-Socialist government would have warmed to Buñuel's ironic documentary about poverty made in 1932, *Las hurdes*. So, when the fascists took power in 1936, Buñuel was forced to contemplate a permanent life in exile. "Good riddance!" cried the Franco gang, rushing to ban young Luis' anti-clerical, anarchic *Un Chien Andalou*.

A movie about Buñuel's life might begin in the first act with the friendship between Luis and the young Salvador Dali (his collaborator on *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'or*), showing the two mad artists struggling to invent a wholly original cinema based on the narrative logic of dreams. Then drifting apart, with Buñuel setting sail for the United States, while Dali swoons into the arms of Gala and the Generalissimo. In the second part, Dali denounces Buñuel as a communist and Luis loses his job at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Cut to Buñuel walking the Depression streets of Manhattan, fantasising about running into his old turncoat pal... and flashback to Buñuel as a boy, in gloves and baggy shorts, the boxer – Whack! Whack! – knocking Dali, moustachios akimbo, to the ground. That night the Buñuel family decamp for Los Angeles on a silver train ("Why are we leaving so quickly, Papi?").

There is a fascinating biography by Buñuel's widow Jeanne Rucar, called *Memorias de una mujer sin piano*. The title refers to an event in which Buñuel promised a piano to one of his cronies, and Jeanne's was the nearest to hand. He had the movers carry it over to his mate's house and forbade her ever to mention it again. Behind his mask of anarchist politics and surrealism, Buñuel was a social conservative, bullying his wife and offspring, whining about imagined aches and pains, hypocritical, secretive and duplicitous. In fact, exactly like the characters in his films.

El is a little-seen masterpiece, made in Mexico in 1952. It's the story of a virginal bourgeois man of about 40 years old. The man is so pious that he joins the boys who wash the feet of ancient clergymen in the cathedral. Our hero falls in love with a fine, upstanding woman – a widow. He woos and marries her, then immediately begins to hate her when he realises she has had sex with another man – her late husband. Shocked into madness, he plots to murder her. In the end, only his ineptitude and cowardice stand in the way. That man was Buñuel! At least if Jeanne Rucar, his wife of 50



Perverse charm of the bourgeoisie: 'The Exterminating Angel'

years, is to be believed. It had to be so. How else would he have understood the villainous minds of the drug-dealing diplomats in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, or the fascistic shopkeepers and serfs in *The Diary of a Chambermaid*, or the fanatical, nay imbecilic, devotion of the holy man in *Simon of the Desert*, or the bizarre inclinations of the whorehouse Johns in *Belle de Jour*? They were him, and he was them.

I always had him figured for a foot-fetishist. Of course! All those scenes of Jeanne Moreau walking with close attention paid to her ankles, and the various bearded *bon vivants* with their dark ancestral mansions and their locked closets filled with women's shoes. But I didn't realise that in his films he was everything else as well – the cops, the uptight, overly-polite bourgeois, the brutish thugs, the seething wives, the innocents, the card-playing priests, the ghosts, the severed hand, the legless and the blind.

In 1961 Buñuel was invited back to Spain to make *Viridiana*, a film which is generally regarded as one of his finest works. He was not optimistic for its prospects; "At best they will ban it" he said, "or put it on for half a week in an out of the way flea-pit where it will achieve neither glory nor blame." Sure enough *Viridiana* was banned by the Spanish authorities. Buñuel returned to Mexico, where he had lived since 1947 and directed 18 films. The following year he made *El angel exterminador*, which I think is his greatest film of all. The charm, perversity, violence and rectitude of its characters, the extraordinary trap in which they find themselves, the overtones of an impending class war, the bear in the kitchen.

Most of the Mexicans who knew Buñuel loved him. Although, some say he was impossible. Such as the chauffeur who Don Luis insisted was always present with the motor running, but was not

allowed to park directly outside, so that the panic-stricken man would wait with his eyes pinned on the front door and his engine churning half a block away. My friend the film editor Carlos Puente tried to interview Buñuel in Mexico City in the 70s. Buñuel didn't want to be interviewed, but agreed to speak to a group of students at the university. Carlos infiltrated the student union and persuaded students to ask specific questions so he could get his interview. But Buñuel gave the same answer to every question, no matter what it was – "Para joder con el publico" ("To fuck with the public").

To receive his Oscar in 1972, Buñuel wore dark glasses, a false moustache and a salt-and-pepper pompadour wig. While he was in Los Angeles, somebody thought to invite him and his writer, Jean-Claude Carrière, to lunch. Word got around, and directors started to get on the phone asking, "Is Don Luis coming? I'd like to be invited too..." When they had their picture taken after the meal, the 'impromptu' lunch included Carrière, Alfred Hitchcock, John Huston, Billy Wilder, Raoul Walsh, William Wyler and half a dozen other major directors sitting in a circle around Buñuel.

Flashback in the Buñuel bio-pic to Henry Miller in a Paris café, raving about the young director. Miller: "Either you're made like the rest of civilised humanity, or you are whole and proud like Buñuel. And if you are whole and proud, then you are an anarchist and you throw bombs."

Cut to Luis and Jeanne in their impeccably bourgeois parlour. Buñuel (lecturing to his wife): "No, no, chérie! It's never necessary to add vermouth to martini. Merely introduce the bottle to the glass, and then return it to the shelf."

Flash forward to act three: The postage stamp. Viva Buñuel! *'Viridiana', 'The Exterminating Angel' and 'Simon of the Desert' are available on Electric Pictures Video*

sequences, excellently shot by Daryn Okada. A Californian surfer (Shane McDermott) is exiled to Cincinnati for six months where rollerblading replaces riding the waves as his primary past time.

Calendar Girl

Director John Whitesell; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 19664; Certificate 15; 88 minutes; Producers Debbie Robins, Gary Marsh; Screenplay Paul W. Shapiro; Lead Actors Jason Priestley, Joe Pantoliano, Jerry O'Connell By-numbers, rites-of-passage movie, starring television heart-throb Jason Priestley. Three teenage boys spend the summer of 1962 in search of their dream woman, Marilyn Monroe.

Caught in the Crossfire

Director Chuck Bowman; USA 1994; Hi-Fiers HFV 8286; Certificate PG; 86 minutes; Producer S. Bryan Hickox; Screenplay D. Victor Hawkins, Tom Nelson, Dan Levine; Lead Actors Dennis Franz, Alley Mills, Daniel Roebuck, Anna Gunn Dull detective thriller, set against the colourful backdrop of the Louisiana bayou, but under-utilising the obvious visual benefits of the location. Hackneyed journalist Gus Payne (Dennis Franz) becomes involved in mob activity after he is recruited as an informant by the FBI. US title: *Moment of Truth: Caught in the Crossfire*.

Double Cross

Director Michael Keusch; Canada 1994; Guild G8781; Certificate 18; 87 minutes; Producer Robert Vince; Screenplay Henry C. Clarke; Lead Actors Patrick Bergin, Jennifer Tilly, Kelly Preston, Kevin Tighe Ridiculous but nonetheless highly enjoyable erotic thriller in which conservative Patrick Bergin is led into a web of intrigue by *femme fatale* Kelly Preston. All the typical genre ingredients are here – a twist-filled plot, predictable dénouement, macho posturing, lingerie-clad women and wailing saxophones which accompany numerous sex scenes. A somewhat original and quirky element is added by casting Jennifer Tilly as Bergin's daffy but loyal supporter, and writer Henry Clarke's unusual decision to let Bergin play, not a hunky labourer or suave lawyer, but a struggling video-store owner.

The Paperboy

Director Douglas Jackson; Canada 1994; First Independent VA 20227; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producers Tom Berry, Franco Battista; Screenplay David Peckinpah; Lead Actors Alexandra Paul, Marc Marut, William Katt, Brigid Tierney A dysfunctional child manipulates and occasionally kills people around him in a desperate attempt to create a surrogate happy home. It's a mystery quite why our hero becomes obsessed by such dreary bores, but Douglas Jackson puts this formulaic thriller through its clearly plotted paces with aplomb. A few creepy moments and a genuinely disturbing performance from the youthful lead make this palatable schlock.

The Revenge of Pumpkinhead II: Blood Wings

Director Jeff Burr; USA 1993; Hi-Fiers HFV 8287; Certificate 18; 84 minutes; Producers Brad Krevoy, Steve Sabler; Screenplay Ivan Chachornia, Constantine Chachornia; Lead Actors Ami Dolenz, Andrew Robinson, Steve Kanaly, J. Trevor Edmond Lance Henriksen wisely turned down a part in this sequel to the superb *Vengeance: The Demon* (aka *Pumpkinhead*) on



Mask of fear: 'Empire of Passion'

the grounds that it lacked a discernible script. Missing the visual and narrative charm of its predecessor, this miserable offering turns Stan Winston's beautiful original Pumpkinhead into a rubbery monster. Once promising director Jeff Burr (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*) reveals his true colours, while the cast features such low-rent celebrities as Roger Clinton. Original title: *Pumpkinhead II*

Retail

Ace Ventura Pet Detective

Director Tom Shadyac; USA 1993; Warner SO13029; Price £12.99; Certificate 12 (S&S May 1994) □

The Age of Innocence

Director Martin Scorsese; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVR 24626 (Widescreen CVR 34626); Price £12.99; Certificate U (S&S February 1994) □

Attack of the 50. Ft Woman

Director Christopher Guest; USA 1993; Entertainment EVS 1143; Price £12.99; Certificate 12 (S&S October 1994)

Benny and Joon

Director Jeremiah Chechik; USA 1993; Warner MGM/UA S053007; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S July 1993)

Carlito's Way

Director Brian De Palma; USA 1993; Universal VHR 1723; Price £13.99; Certificate 18 (S&S February 1994)

Cousin Cousine

Director Jean-Charles Tacchella; France 1975; Arrow FC 004; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
An endearing, whimsical tale about two cousins, Marthe (Marie-Christine Barrault) and Ludovic (Victor Lanoux), who meet at a wedding and become friends. Their platonic relationship turns to romance after their respective partners begin an affair. (MFB No. 515)

The Crush

Director Alan Shapiro; USA 1993; Warner SO12926; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S Video April 1994)

The Devil's Playground

Director Fred Schepisi; Australia 1976; Art House AHP 5022; Price £15.99; Certificate 15
An amiable, semi-autobiographical rites-of-passage drama. Set during the 50s in a strict Roman Catholic school, where a 13-year-old boy (Simon Burke) struggles to preserve his piety in the face of human needs and desires. (MFB No. 523)

Eerie Indiana

Director Sam Pillsbury; USA 1991; PolyGram 6335703; Price £12.99; Certificate U (S&S Video August 1992)

Empire of Passion (Ai no Borei)

Director Nagisa Oshima; Japan/France 1978; Connoisseur Video CR 135; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
A superior companion piece to Oshima's infamous *Ai no Corrida*. An old rickshaw rider returns as a ghost to haunt his murderer wife and her young lover. As in *Ai no Corrida*, the director explores similar themes of cruelty and passion, but, thankfully, without indulging in the tedious couplings and longueurs of the former. Aka *Phantom Love*. (MFB No. 541)

Exterminating Angel (El angel exterminador)

Director Luis Buñuel; Mexico 1962; Electric Pictures E-072; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate 12
Buñuel's simple yet brutal attack on the bourgeoisie involves a group of dinner guests who find it impossible to leave a room after finishing dinner. Days pass, as their shallow facades are stripped away to reveal bestial and venal desires, including witchcraft, suicide, incest and



Crusade of passion: 'Lancelot du Lac'

cannibalism. Rarely has a film-maker so incisively portrayed people caught up in a hell of their own making. (MFB No. 391)

Fitzcarraldo

Director Werner Herzog; West Germany 1982; Tartan Video TVT 1206; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
A fanatical idealist (Klaus Kinski), who dreams of staging opera in the Amazon jungle, persuades a team of local Indians to pull a steamship over a mountain in pursuit of his goal. While shooting, Herzog himself bordered on insanity as he pushed cast and crew to impossible limits by refusing to use trick photography and literally dragging a ship up a mountain. (MFB No. 582)

The Hour of the Pig

Director Leslie Megahey; UK/France 1993; Curzon CV 0050; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S February 1994)

Innocent Blood

Director John Landis; USA 1992; Warner SO12570; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S August 1993)

Lancelot du Lac

Director Robert Bresson; France/Italy 1974; Artificial Eye ART 106; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Highly original and hypnotic retelling of the Arthurian legend. After a fruitless and costly search for the Holy Grail, the knights return to England feeling bitter. The story's romantic traditions are subtly undermined by Bresson's austere gaze, aided by detached performances and an obtrusive soundtrack. (S&S November 1994)

The Last Outlaw

Director Geoff Murphy; USA 1993; Medusa 6322643; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S Video August 1994)

Manhattan Murder Mystery

Director Woody Allen; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVR 29798; Price £12.99; Certificate PG (S&S February 1994) □

Matinee

Director Joe Dante; USA 1993; Guild GLD 51522; Price £12.99; Certificate PG (S&S June 1993)

Nemesis

Director Albert Pyun; USA 1992;

PolyGram 6336423; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S Video August 1993)

Prince of Shadows (Beltenebros)

Director Pilar Milo; Spain 1991; Tartan Video TVT 1025; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S April 1994)

The Real McCoy

Director Russell Mulcahy; USA 1993; Guild GLD 51582; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S November 1993)

The Remains of the Day

Director James Ivory; UK/USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVR 29665 (Widescreen CVR 39665) Price £12.99; Certificate U (S&S December 1993) □

Rich in Love

Director Bruce Beresford; USA 1992; MGM/UA S052691; Price £10.99; Certificate PG (S&S May 1993)

Road Flower

Director Deran Sarafian; USA 1993; Entertainment EVS 1175; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S Video September 1994)

Simon of the Desert (Simón del desierto)

Director Luis Buñuel; Mexico 1965; Electric Pictures E-073; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 12
Claudio Brooks plays a man who emulates Saint Simon Stylites by standing on a pillar in the middle of the desert for six years, six weeks and six days as an example to the peasants. He tries to resist the temptations of the devil who appears in the guise of a woman, and later, as Jesus. (MFB No. 424)

Stroszek

Director Werner Herzog; West Germany 1977; Tartan Video TVT 1208; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
A busker travels with his neighbour and a prostitute from the sterility of Berlin to Wisconsin. Following a botched robbery, the trio make their separate ways across America. Herzog's instinctive feel for capturing majestic landscapes is one of the few highs in this otherwise drab and predictable outsider's meditation on the barrenness of middle America. (MFB No. 529)

That Night

Director Craig Bolotin; USA 1992; MGM/UA SO12572; Price £10.99; Certificate 12 (S&S June 1994)

Untamed Heart

Director Tony Bill; USA 1993; MGM/UA S0528131; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S May 1993)

What's Eating Gilbert Grape

Director Lasse Hallström; USA 1993; Entertainment EVS 1152; Price £12.99; Certificate 12 (S&S May 1994)

Retail premiere

As Tears Go By

Director Wong Kar-Wai; Hong Kong 1988; Made in Hong Kong HK 015; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 94 minutes; Producer Rover Tang; Screenplay

WIND UP By Peter Dean

● James Cameron's *True Lies* has fallen foul of the UK censors, causing it to miss its mid-February rental release slot. Scenes involving Jamie Lee Curtis which the BBFC "believes may be demeaning to women" have resulted in a holdback which has caused a gap in CIC Video's release schedule. None of the BBFC's recent objections have concerned a 15 certificated title, with the exception of *Cliffhanger*, one of the most heavily-cut Hollywood video releases of last year (see Wind Up January 1995). 15-rated films are normally cut so as to reach their intended audience. Not so with *True Lies*. According to CIC's managing director, it's "not about having a 15 certificate which we had theatrically, but simply to ensure that the content is appropriate from the BBFC's viewpoint."

● Japanese animation is now a Europe-wide phenomenon, with Spain and the UK the fastest-growing markets in the world. Expansion is UK-based however, because the US and UK are the traditional conduits for television sales. Japanese is also expensive to translate, so that bulk orders are being whipped out to countries where English is the second language, irrespective of who owns which rights. There is also an illegal imports scenario where uncut *Anime* versions are being shipped back into the UK if the BBFC cuts them. Advocates of a single Euro-certificate please take note. Cantonese would also seem to be an expensive language to translate if the subtitles of *Hard Boiled 2: The Last Blood* are anything to go by (see Retail Premiere). Easily the worst job seen in 30 years of film-going or video watching; and worth buying on that strength alone!

● Hong Kong cinema is now being better served by video. Joining the label Made in Hong Kong on the market is new label Eastern Heroes whose first titles include *Hard Boiled 2*, *Magic Cop*, *Spooky Encounters*, *Lethal Panther* and *The Holy Virgin vs the Evil Dead*. Toby Russell (son of Ken) and Rick Baker are the enthusiasts behind the label, having set up an Eastern Heroes shop in London's Camden Town selling videos and memorabilia. Their Eastern Heroes magazine, a spin-off from Baker's Jackie Chan Appreciation Society newsletter, has already reached its 20th issue. Forthcoming is a video version of the magazine featuring interviews, clips etc. Hopefully the translation department will have a budget by then.

● Blockbuster Video, the UK's largest video chain, is closing down 200 of the 675 Ritz Video stores it acquired in 1992 in the Cityvision buyout and turning them into franchised Blockbuster Express stores. Based on the same Blockbuster Megastore concept and sharing the same name, Blockbuster Express, these have more than a passing similarity to KC Express, the Kentucky Fried Chicken chain. For all critics of the Hollywood film machine, who liken it to the fast-food industry, there is now proof that new product is being treated like new lines of fast food. Engineering the Blockbuster/Ritz shake-up is Nigel Travis, who was responsible for establishing Burger King in Europe. His new recruits at Blockbuster are ex-Burger King marketing man Bernard Salt and Dan Fishman who earned his spurs at McDonalds. Masterminding Blockbuster's expansion into Germany is John Rollo who established McDonalds, Burger King and Wendy's in Germany. Travis describes his team as "an exciting mix of fast food retailers and experienced Blockbuster staff." To Travis, fast food and video aren't opposite ends of the universe: "They are in the fun side of business - you don't go to either for a miserable time, you build up an in-store ambience and excitement. With video though, there's the advantage of having at least one new product each week to shout about."

● The Ed Wood Collection on the new video label Retro has been delayed. *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, *Glen or Glenda* and other titles are being held back so that the release will tie in with Martin Landau's Oscar nomination and the release date of Tim Burton's Ed Wood bio-pic. Getting the green light however are even worse B-movies from another new label called Killer Bs. *The Brain from Planet Arous*, *Cat Women of the Moon* and *The Mesa of Lost Women* are out on March 13.

● The Gothic horror label Redemption is moving on from the middle ages to the twentieth century, releasing 10 films including *Flavia the Heretic Nun* and *I Am Curious Yellow* onto Video CD. Laser Disc users - and face it there aren't many about - have got something to crow about this month with the release of Welles' *Touch of Evil* under the Pioneer Cinema banner. The disc will contain background notes, stills from the film and the original theatrical trailer.

Wong Kar-Wai; Lead Actors Andy Lau, Maggie Cheung; Jacky Cheung
A superbly gritty debut, let down by Wong's tendency to go for the big scene - complete with MTV-style editing and music - every five minutes. Andy Lau stars as Ah Wah, a psychotic debt collector estranged from his partner (Jacky Cheung) and other members of his gang. Ah Wah's shy cousin (Maggie Cheung) arrives promising hope of escape from the urban hell.

Dirty Ho (Lantau He)

Director Liu Chia Liang; Hong Kong 1979; Made in Hong Kong HK 024; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15; 99 minutes; Producer Run Run Shaw; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Wong Yue, Liu Chia Hui, Hui Ying Hung, Lo Lih
Period martial arts spectacle, made in the same year as Liu's impressive *Mad Monkey Kung Fu*. Unlike most examples of the genre, the transfer to video is excellent, boasting clarity of colour and a fine widescreen ratio aspect. The eleventh son (Wong Yue) of the Chinese emperor travels incognito with his vagabond friend to a ceremony in which his father will announce a successor to the throne.

A Girl Called Keetje Tippel (Keetje Tippel)

Director Paul Verhoeven; Netherlands 1975; Missing in Action V3421; Price £14.99; Certificate 18; 104 minutes; Producer Rob Houwer; Screenplay Gerard Soeteman; Lead Actors Monique van de Ven, Rutger Hauer, Andrea Domburg
As in *Flesh & Blood*, this early Verhoeven bio-pic delivers a sensationalist view of history. A rags-to-riches saga set in Holland in 1881, in which a poverty-stricken young woman (Monique van de Ven) vainly tries to better her life through an affair with a rich banker (Rutger Hauer) who wants her as his mistress.

Hard Boiled 2: The Last Blood

Director Wong Jing; Hong Kong 1994; Eastern Heroes EH 0001; Price £13.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Andy Lau, Alan Tam, Eric Tsang, Leung Kar Yan

Poor subtitling turns this high-octane, comic action pic into a travesty (eg: "The computer analyze of the Singapore resident is very detail"). Along with fellow directors Ringo Lam and John Woo, Wong Jing has brought an air of respectability to the Hong Kong thriller genre. Tightly directed set-pieces, slow-motion photography and superbly choreographed fights elevate this shaggy dog thriller about a tourist in Singapore (Andy Lau) who helps to save the life of the Dakai Lama (sic). This bares little relationship to Woo's original.

Hawks and Sparrows (Uccellacci e uccellini)

Director Pier Paolo Pasolini; Italy 1966; Connoisseur Video CR 170; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate PG; Producer Alfredo Bini; Screenplay Luigi Scaccianoce; Lead Actors Toto, Davoli Ninetto, Femi Benussi, Umberto Bevilacqua

A pair of *picares* (one of them the legendary Italian clown, Toto) wander through the Italian countryside on a pilgrimage in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi. Pasolini comments on the changing social landscape by using a mix of styles, including newsreel footage from the communist leader Palmiro Togliatti's funeral and quotations from left-wing

intellectuals that are 'spoken' by a talking crow. The loose narrative structure allows the director to explore his preoccupation with neo-realism and Marxism.

The Holy Virgin vs the Evil Dead

Director Choy Fat; Hong Kong 1990; Eastern Heroes EH 0002; Price £13.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Donnie Yen, Ken Lo, Pauline Wong, Hui Hoi Chung, Lam Wei Lan

One of the first genre hybrid movies to be issued the new Category III rating (equivalent to the 18 certificate in the UK) by the Hong Kong Censorship Board. Taking advantage of the relaxation by some Asian countries regarding nudity on screen, this comic horror combines erotic fantasy in a tale about a wimpish professor who confronts an evil force which rapes and kills several of his female students.

Lethal Panther

Director Philip Kao; Hong Kong 1993; Eastern Heroes EH 0004; Price £13.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Yukari Oshima, Phillip Kao

Kao's fourth collaboration with cult Japanese martial arts star Yukari Oshima, is another over-the-top action movie. Oshima plays an undercover cop who travels to the Philippines to help the local police bust a Triad gang. The print has seen better days and, unfortunately, the bad disco soundtrack detracts from the stylish fight sequences.

The Monastery of Sandomir (Klostret i Sandomir)

Director Victor Sjöström; Sweden 1919; Redemption RETN 045; Price £12.99; B/W; Silent; Certificate U; 54 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Tora Teje, Tore Svenborg, Richard Lund, Renée Björling

A serialised supernatural tale, which highlights Sjöström's penchant for long takes and deep focus. The story, as in *The Phantom Carriage* made the following year, is told in flashback. Two riders on their way to Warsaw seek shelter for the night in a monastery where a sinister monk tells them a complex, tragic tale about an unfaithful wife and a murder. The print is of a high quality and is accompanied by a new piano soundtrack. Aka *The Secret of the Monastery*.

Wagner

Director Tony Palmer; UK 1984; Connoisseur Video CR 171; Price £39.99; Certificate 15; 7 hours, 40 minutes; Producer Alan Wright; Screenplay Charles Wood; Lead Actors Richard Burton, Vanessa Redgrave, Lawrence Olivier, John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Gemma Craven

Intended as a European mini-series, then a two-part feature, Tony Palmer's lavish, eight-hour biography is admirable in its scale and depth. Richard Burton delivers an erratic performance as the nineteenth-century composer, but the rest of the cast (a who's who of British actors - with Gielgud, Richardson and Olivier together for the first time) give solid support. The emphasis is on Wagner's historical environs and political ambitions rather than his music. Palmer makes use of striking locations, and the chiaroscuro of Vittorio Storaro's camerawork (reminiscent of the Dutch masters) is outstanding.



Testing the censors: 'True Lies' may be cut because of scenes "demeaning to women"

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Terrordome's compassion

From Mansel Stimpson

Last year I attended an early press screening of an independent British film which, had I allowed myself to be influenced by its title or publicity, I might have been predisposed to dislike. But, preferring to judge by what unfolded on the screen, I found myself impressed by its power, surprised by its complexity and admiring of its cinematic qualities, achieved despite a low budget.

Consequently I was shocked by the violent animosity expressed by so many critics to *Welcome II the Terrordome* – for this was, indeed, the film I had seen. Admittedly it's not a faultless picture, and I had seen the danger that some black audiences, those already advocating violence as a response to wrongs done to them, would pick up on the equivalent elements in the film without giving weight to the factors which serve as a counterbalance. But I had not foreseen that so many presumably dispassionate British critics would misread the film to the extent of describing it as an out-and-out incitement to racial violence.

Given the in-depth approach to cinema favoured by *Sight and Sound*, one might have expected to find greater perception in your pages, but not so. Your February issue contained a review of the film by Robert Yates which, at best, betrayed muddled reactions. His accusation that clichés made it hard to take any sentiment or action seriously fitted ill with his concession that there were powerful scenes to admire. And having declared that the film uses colour as a stark essentialist divider of the characters, he then refers to the editing (but why not the script?) as seeking to blur this divide and to give a more complex picture.

But there's no confusion once we turn to Paul Gilroy's article in the same issue. Lambasting the film, Gilroy makes his case through the use of unjustifiable assumptions, such as a black matriarch being the director's mouthpiece. Most significantly, we are back to the same misreading of the film – that it's a blatant endorsement of fascist violence in the cause of separatism.

But the case for reading *Welcome II the Terrordome* as a warning against the attitudes which lead to the violence depicted is at least as strong. In the space of a letter I can only stress the degree of compassion conveyed in those scenes showing the suffering imposed on a white girl living with a black man, an emotion quite out of keeping with the interpretations of the film put forward. When I saw the movie, I knew little about its creator, Ngozi Onwurah, but I subsequently interviewed her. Her comments made it clear that her own views were quite different from those that have been ascribed to her as the creator of this picture. Even more importantly, I learnt that her compassion for the leading white character came from the fact that while her father is African her mother is white. The emotions so well conveyed in the film stem from this, and I felt them no less because this knowledge came to me after the event.

Even the attack on the film's cinematic

qualities is suspect (Philip French, who was worried by the picture, was nevertheless honest enough to acknowledge the talent in it). *Welcome II the Terrordome* is the most maligned British film since *Peeping Tom* and, having been in the minority about that in 1960, I'm happy to be in the minority again. London NW3

Lawrence sources

From Len Deighton

When my article *Sand and Sea* (S&S January) was edited the numbered footnotes giving my sources were also removed. Your editor has most kindly allowed me to summarise these as follows:

Lawrence's own book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is essential reading, and so is *The Mint*, but Richard Aldington's 1955 *Lawrence of Arabia – a Biographical Enquiry* added a controversial dimension. Phillip Knightley and Colin Simpson's 1969 *The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia* provided the best and most objective account until *Lawrence of Arabia* by Jeremy Wilson (New York, Atheneum, 1990), which used newly released government papers – in addition, A. W. Lawrence (Lawrence's brother and literary executor) gave Wilson full access to the entire collection of photos, documents and letters under his control. From this came a chance to reappraise everything written before, including Aldington.

In 1992 L. Robert Morris and Lawrence Raskin published their remarkable *Lawrence of Arabia* (New York, Anchor Books Doubleday) which combined the sort of research and academic precision that satisfies the Lawrence scholars with a detailed account of the film's making and many wonderful photographs. I found it most helpful for my article, while the fact that the book is not available in the UK is deplorable.

Jim Pepper – a California publisher and noted film expert – gave me his copy of the Morris and Raskin book and pointed out the struggle Korda had with the British government. This is described in *The Journal of Contemporary History* – see 'Censorship in Action: the Case of Lawrence of Arabia' by Jeffrey Richards and Jeffrey Hulbert. Pepper most generously also provided his own copy of the unpublished manuscript of *Lawrence Before David Lean* which he'd prepared together with Andrew Kelly and Jeffrey Richards. This is due to be published in London by Bellew and should provoke much interest and comment.

On the subject of Alexander Korda I had heard many valuable stories. Additionally the fascinating *Charmed Lives: A Family Romance* by Michael Korda (New York, Random House, 1979) gives an intimate dimension that supplements Karol Kulik's *Alexander Korda: the man who could work miracles* (London, W. H. Allen 1975). Lean and Spiegel are surrounded with almost as many legends as Korda. I particularly valued Hugh Hudson's article about Lean in *Sight & Sound* (1991) and Andrew Sinclair's book *Spiegel the Man behind the Pictures* (Boston, Little Brown and Co, 1987). Guinness' encounter with the custodian of Cloud's Hill was recounted in his autobiography *Blessings in Disguise* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1985).

Eric Ambler, whose script for *The Cruel Sea* remains a peerless example of that art, talked to me at length about the making of

the film. I wish I had been able to use much more of his account but perhaps he'll write it himself one day. The novelist Peter Evans – an encyclopaedic authority on films and film-making – might well recognise some of his stories on display, as indeed would the late Harry Saltzman.

London NW1

Two approaches

From Quentin Decker

In his article *Sand and Sea* (S&S January), it is clear that Mr Deighton is simply reiterating two very old arguments about film. There are two questions: (a) is cinema an industrial product meant for worldwide mass-consumption or an art form that appeals to the individual? And (b) is it a landscape of visual stimulation or a tableau to examine an element of the universe? Neither question is new. Mr Deighton has chosen the second answer in both cases. This is no surprise; he is a writer of books. His goal when writing is to involve the individual reader in a study of the characters he presents. I, however, say there is room for both types of films. Great sagas like *Lawrence of Arabia* may have gotten me interested in film and kept me interested, but it is intimate character studies like *The Cruel Sea* that keep me going back to the movies.

What's more, I hope that both types of approach in both cases – and all others in between – will continue to be made and will continue to fascinate me.

Visalia, California

Ongoing chronicle

From J. R. Surry

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you all on your invaluable *Chronicle of the Cinema 1895-1995*, which I have greatly enjoyed and will no doubt have recourse to often? May I at the same time suggest an annual supplement – with the February or March issue – covering the main artistic and cinema events of the previous year, the obituaries, and a full list of the year's film awards? An ongoing chronicle, as it were. I myself would find such a supplement a most useful reference work when compiling notes for films shown at the Bridport Film Society.

Bridport, Dorset

Editor's note: We intend to pursue this suggestion next year

Omitting Sergio

From James Macdonald

I appreciate that a project as ambitious as David Robinson's *Chronicle of Cinema* supplements can never hope to be definitive – and that it must be tedious to get letters from readers complaining about omissions of their own favourites – but if you are ever producing a revised version, it may be worth considering whether the films listed in part five should not include Leone's *Once Upon a Time in America*.

London NW2

Additions and corrections

February 1995 p. 25: *The Times* not *The London Times*; p. 37: in the review of *Keepers of the Frame*, Penelope Houston not Huston

The Chronicle of Cinema, 1980-1995

p. 112: (1985 films, USSR) *Come and See* not *Go and See*; p. 122: (1992 films, Portugal) *O Dia do desespero* not *O Dias do desespero*.

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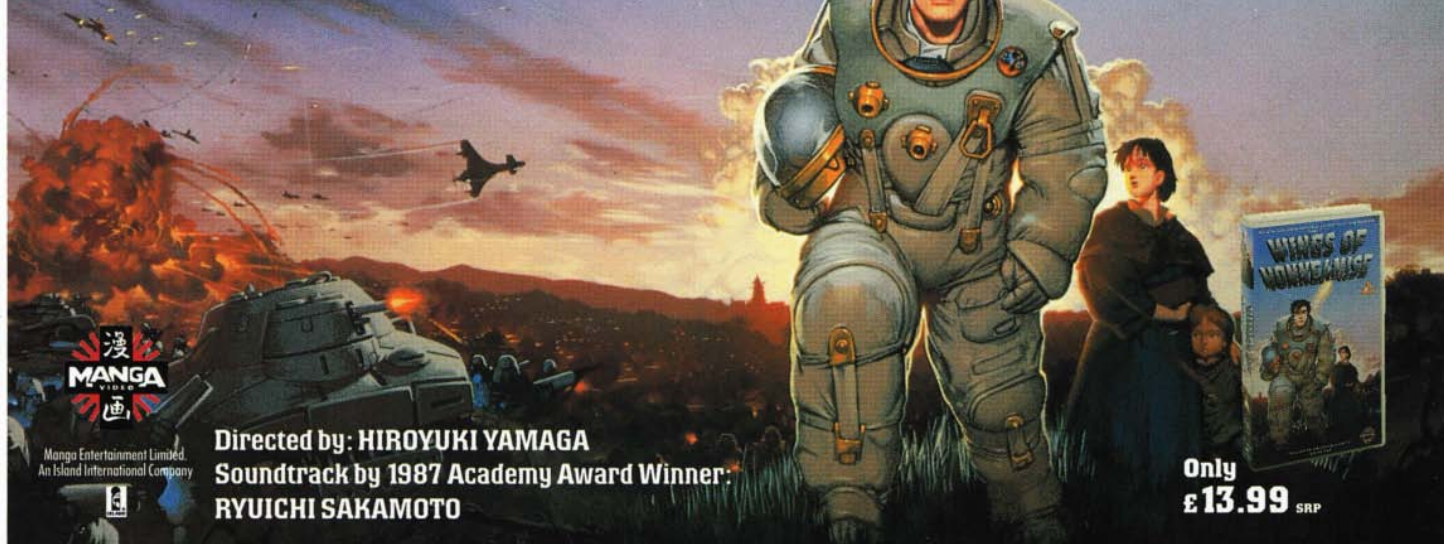
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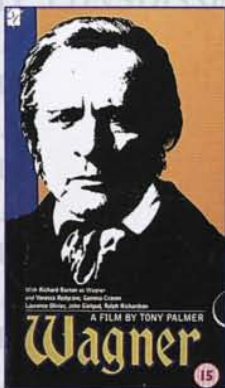
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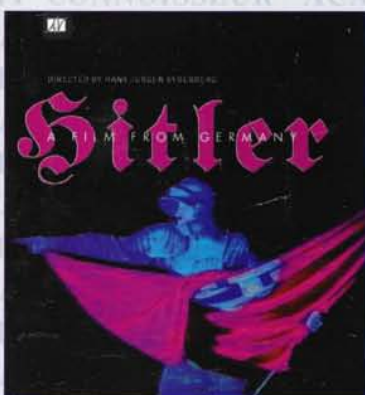
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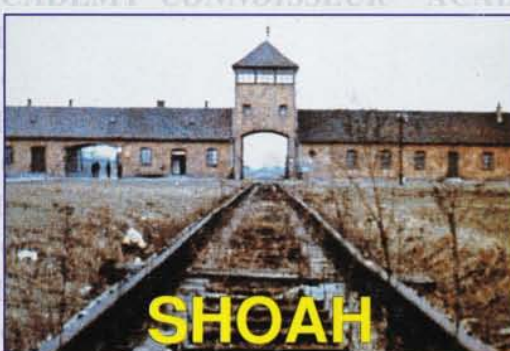


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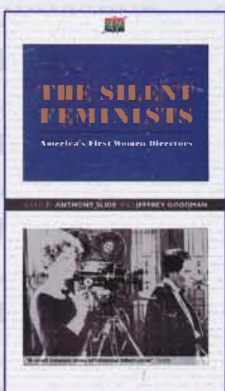
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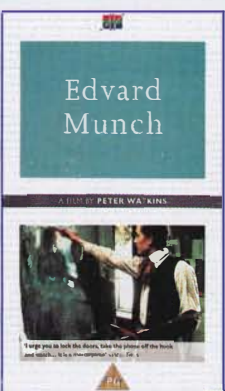
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